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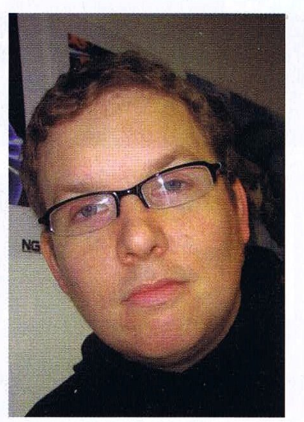
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IT'S-A HIM. AGAIN!





Two months into the year and Nintendo's main mascot already has two games. With him turning his big, fat, gloved hand to everything from snowboarding to dancing and football last year, he was in serious danger of becoming overexposed. However, after a false start to 2006 with yet another damn *Party*, he's back on form in *Mario & Luigi: Partners in Time*. Not only is it another classic Mario adventure, but it's the first star game of the new year. While the likes of *Golf* and *Tennis* are all good, there's nothing better than getting stuck into an adventure in the Mushroom Kingdom. Of course, the story is typical pap (as a teaser, how many times has Bowser kidnapped Peach?), but the dialogue is a joy, making it one of the funniest Nintendo games ever.

There's more to come from the plumber this year too, with *Mario 3x3* on DS, but come the end of the year, with hopefully a new *Mario* adventure and *Super Smash Bros* for Revolution, no one will be complaining that he's starring in too many games.

He gets a month off in March, but hopefully we'll be heading back to the Kingdom for *Super Princess Peach*. See you then!

TOM

TURN OVER THE PAGE!
Head over to page 6 now for the all the latest Revolution gossip



SUBSCRIBE TODAY!
Head over to page 63 to see how you can get **NGC** delivered direct to your door, before it hits the news stands.

THIS MONTH WE HAVE MOSTLY BEEN PLAYING...

GERAINT
■ We've been so starved of decent fighting games on Gamecube that I forgot the genre actually existed. *Naruto*, then, is a nice surprise. No, it's not as good as *Soul Calibur*, but it's still very accomplished and has a smart fighting system too.

MARTIN

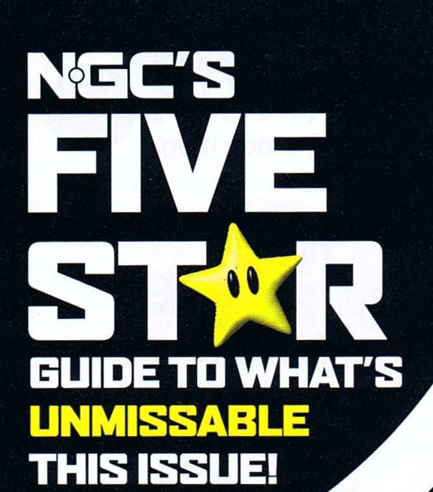

■ It has to be *Snowboard Kids* for me. Okay, so it may not have the big-nosed freakery of the original game, and it's not as good as the N64 classic, but I've been playing it all the same. It's fast and it's fun, making it a decent little winter warmer.

GREENER


■ Still *Mario Kart*. Surely everyone is playing this right now. I actually 'borrowed' Geraint's copy for this and got an earful when he realised that I destroyed his win-loss ratio by racing online and getting a repeated kicking. Ha!

THOMAS


■ I managed to put down the *Kart* (still going at that Mission mode) and started on *Super Monkey Ball DS*. It's so frustrating yet so damn addictive that I love it and hate it at the same time. Not sure about the stylus control though...



1 PAGE 12

TOP 10 MARIO KART TRACKS

RACING RUNDOWN

Greener picks his ten favourite *Mario Kart* circuits of all time.



2 PAGE 32

SNOWBOARD KIDS DS

COLD, COLD MOUNTAINS

They're back! But what's happened to their noses? Find out in our review!

PAGE 24

The brothers gonna work it out – all four of 'em!



FANGAME FEATURE

NON-NINTENDO NINTENDO

There's no Nintendo Seal Of Approval for these internet games created by fans…



MARIO KART DS TIPS

AVOID ROAD RAGE

Get three stars on every mission with the help of our words and pictures.



TIMEWARP

OLD GAMES HERE

Mark Green sticks a spoon in his ear and digs out more Nintendo memories from his brain. Don't miss it!



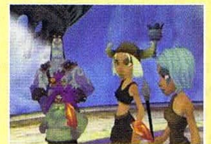
WHAT'S IN NGC?

Spoiler alert! Magazine contents revealed below!

PREVIEWS

We'd review them, but they aren't finished yet.









NEWS

The pages that come with a large pinch of salt.

OTHER STUFF

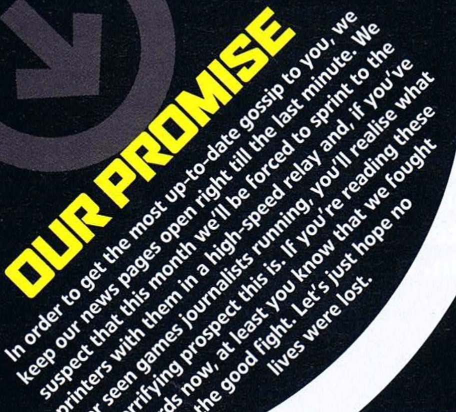
Not news, not reviews, not previews… what, then?



REVIEWS

Now with DS and GBA games mixed in!





OUR PROMISE

In order to get the most up-to-date gossip to you, we keep our news pages open right till the last minute. We suspect that this month we'll be forced to sprint to the printers with them in a high-speed relay and, if you've ever seen games journalists running, you'll realise what a terrifying prospect this is. If you're reading these words now, at least you know that we fought the good fight. Let's just hope no lives were lost.

NGC BRINGING YOU NEWS FIRST

NEWSDESK

IN NEWS THIS MONTH

SEEING DOUBLE! SPLINTER CELL DOUBLE AGENT P8

MEGA MAN AND MORE! GREAT NEW GAMES ON THEIR WAY P9

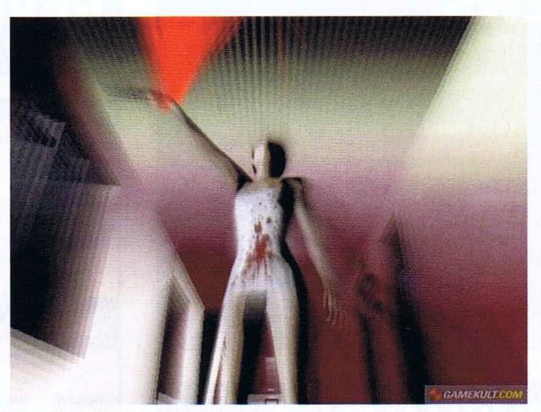


PLUS! HAVE YOU WON A NEW GAME BOY MICRO? P10

AND MORE...

REVOLUTION GOSSIP

The latest rumours and rumblings on Revolution...



△ A *Killer 7*-alike on Revolution? Expect serious weirdness...



△ *Killer 7* offered ultra-violence and fantastic gaming on GC.



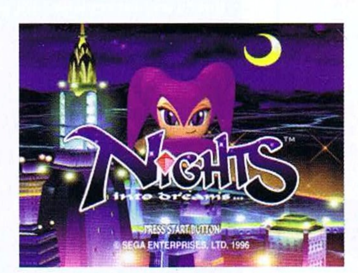
KILLER 7 PRODUCER ON REVOLUTION...

Gouchi Suda, head of Grasshopper Studios – the developers responsible for the visually stunning, super-violent oddity that's *Killer 7* – has not only pledged his support for Revolution, but has also stated that plans for a completely original Revolution game are already underway. Quite what shape this will take is anyone's guess, although Suda did reveal that the game would be 'extreme' and similar to what people have come to expect from a Grasshopper game.

Well, given the fact that the only Grasshopper games we're aware of are the utterly insane *Killer 7* and the creepy, voyeuristic cameraman game *Michigan* on PS2, we suspect that whatever this upcoming Revolution game may be, it'll probably be very disturbing in some way. Which is good enough for us.

RETRO SEGA DOWNLOADS

During a recent industry event in Washington, where Reggie Fils-Amie was present for some Wi-Fi and face-to-face *Mario Kart* races with gamers, the big man let slip that Sega was very interested in the Revolution's backward compatibility; specifically, the hardware's ability to download Nintendo's older back catalogue. Could Sega be looking to make some of its old classics available on the service? It would certainly make a lot of sense...



△ Will Sega's classic games soon be available to download onto Revolution?

HIDDEN FUNCTIONALITY

It seems that the Revolution controller's motion/tilt sensitivity and the Nunchaku extension isn't the only thing that's special about the device. Speaking at the Digital Interactive Entertainment Conference in Japan early last month, Shigeru Miyamoto said that there are still more secrets to reveal regarding the controller.

We already know that there will be more attachments available for the device, so he could well be referring to those. Regardless, any more functionality for a controller which is already something very special indeed can only be a good thing. The only bad news is that we'll probably have to wait until E3 early this May for any more detailed information on the controller.



◁ The original 'lozenge' DS made its debut at E3 in May 2004 and was never seen again.

◁ This is what we predicted DS would look like back in 2003. Maybe the redesigned one will be similar.

DS REDESIGNED

The touchy-feely handheld is about to mutate...

We have it on (fairly) good authority that the Nintendo DS will be redesigned well ahead of schedule, with a potential public unveiling as early as the E3 show in May. This means that by the time Revolution launches in November, you may be able to partner it with a much sleeker and smaller version of the market-leading handheld.

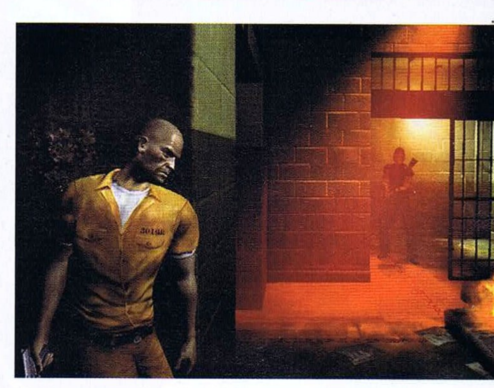
Both the NES and SNES were redesigned during their lifetimes, as was the original Game Boy. The Game Boy Advance is currently on its third iteration, and the DS we're all used to is itself a cosmetic upgrade from the model originally shown at E3 in 2004.

With DS sales sky-rocketing thanks to a raft of must-have titles, there's no compelling commercial reason to change anything right now. However, the gorgeous white casing of Revolution clearly demands to be coupled with something that's just a little bit smarter than the current silver spaceship design, and so a few tweaks are in order.

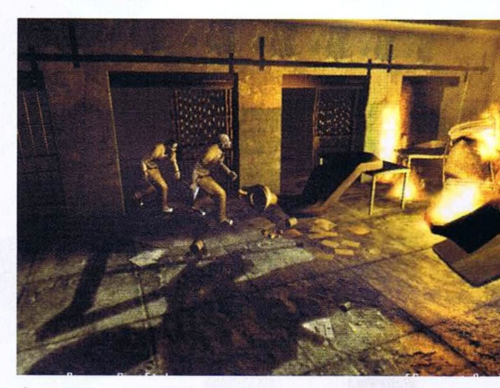
We've no idea what form the next DS will take, but if we could design our dream handheld, we'd give it the buttons from the GB Micro, we'd trim that dead space around the top half, and maybe remove the big hinge gap between the two screens so the join would be less obvious. We'd also get rid of the GBA compatibility – there's no need for it now that the DS has a strong games library of its own. Also, the cart slot and associated hardware forms a surprisingly large part of the DS's current bulk.

In the absence of any further details, perhaps you'd like to tell us what you'd like to see in a redesigned DS. Draw us a picture, write us a letter or send an email to ngc@futurenet.co.uk. We'll print our favourites in a couple of months.





Δ Not your typical Sam Fisher adventure, that's for sure.



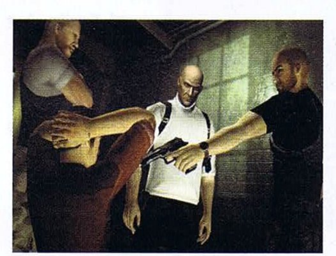
Δ It's just like *Chronicles Of Riddick*, you know.



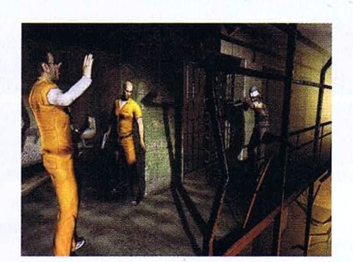
GOOD SPY, BAD SPY

Batting for the other side with Splinter Cell Double Agent

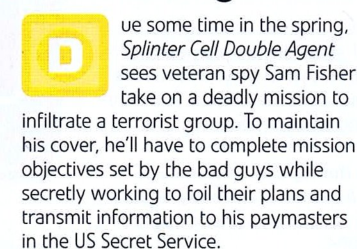




Δ It's execution time in this most cheerful of games.



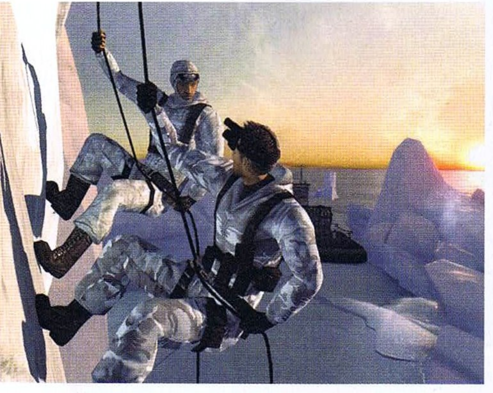
Δ Will Sam have to decapitate a minor character to prove himself?



Due some time in the spring, *Splinter Cell Double Agent* sees veteran spy Sam Fisher take on a deadly mission to infiltrate a terrorist group. To maintain his cover, he'll have to complete mission objectives set by the bad guys while secretly working to foil their plans and transmit information to his paymasters in the US Secret Service.

It sounds like the kind of thing Jack Bauer gets up to in *24*. Sam will have to do bad things to earn the trust of the terrorists, but if he gets carried away then he'll be cut off from his official support at HQ. On the other hand, if he plays it too safe then he'll arouse the suspicion of the enemy leaders.

There will be multiple endings, depending on how you decide to tackle the game, and there will be missions set underwater, in a sandstorm and even while skydiving. The Gamecube version will feature 'exclusive content' too.



Δ Ahh, this is more like it – a leisurely spot of mountaineering while wearing a tripod.

SELLING OUT

Scores on the doors for Nintendo's consoles



With 2005 now a distant memory, Nintendo's bean-counters have been carefully guesstimating the total number of consoles they've sold worldwide. Top of the list, shifting a grand total of 70 million units since its launch in 2001, is the Game Boy Advance series. Well done!

Next, with a comparatively paltry 19 million units, is the Gamecube. Must try harder.

And finally there's the DS, which has sold 9 million in its first full year along. Not only that, but thanks to *Nintendogs*, *Mario Kart* and *Animal Crossing*, Nintendo's latest device is now firmly established as the reigning heavyweight champ of handhelds. Who said those twin screens were just a gimmick?



Now this would be that Mega fella, we reckon.



The power of green swoosh.

MEGA MAN MEGAMIX COLLECTION

The Blue Bomber is back

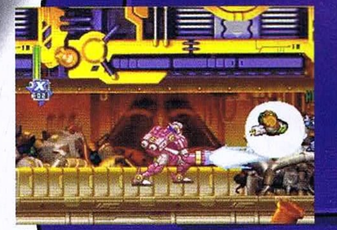




There was a time when *Mega Man* games were actually pretty good – most notably the X series one through to six, three on the SNES and three on PS. It's these six instalments that are being bundled onto one Gamecube disk. And if that wasn't enough, there's also *Mega Man Anniversary Collection* for GBA – a retro treat that includes the original *Mega Man* series on SNES, as well as two never before released arcade games.



What they want to do is a Gunstar-style remake...



And they ought to spend no less than three years doing it...



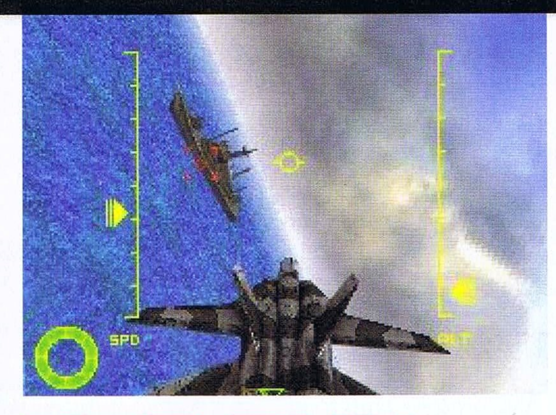
And they need to include a hot cartoon Mega Lady in there.

TALES OF TEMPEST

Namco's RPG hits DS...

And we have to say it's looking impressive. Namco will use the DS's 3D capabilities to the full, bringing you a fully explorable overworld and bustling towns to explore. In fact, the world, doesn't seem to be a far cry from that found in *Tales of Symphonia*. Better yet, the linear, real-time battle system, which is now the series' trademark, is making a comeback, this time with added stylus control.

While this is clearly a very early version, it seems to be coming along a treat.



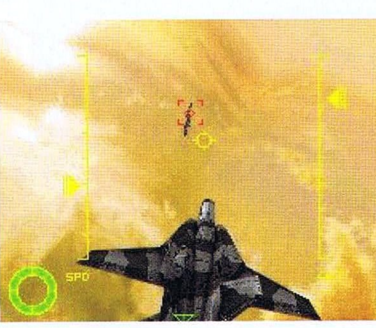
TOP GUN

New flight sim takes off

Developed by Interactive Vision, this game takes you through ten different single-player campaigns, in a variety of aircraft. The crucial test will come with the game's controls and whether it will allow for touch-creen piloting. If it works out, the prospect of four-player dogfights will be pretty hard to resist...



Mystery of life number 1337: Why do they keep making *Top Gun* games?



All the shooting and flying of the movie, without the homo-eroticism.

YOUR GAME BOY MICRO DESIGNS

Look! Here's your lovely artwork! Aren't you talented?

Back in issue 113, we challenged you to design your own Game Boy Micro faceplate, and after much goatee stroking, our art experts have decided on the winners. So, our congratulations go out to this lot, who'll soon have a brand spanking new Micro winging its way to them, along with a copy of *Dr Mario & Puzzle League*. Well done!

AND THE WINNERS ARE...

Δ Chris Bounds of Bognor Regis, who sent this great Mario anniversary faceplate.

∇ Ashley Law of Crediton, with more Mario – we like the eyes!

◁ Helen McCartney or West Cornforth, with a subtle Yoshi-spot design.

▷ Jos Antens of The Netherlands, whose superb entries included this fur effect.

Δ Jukka Makkonen of Finland, with cute yet psychedelic Pikmin artwork.

The 'strange and slightly scary' awards go to...

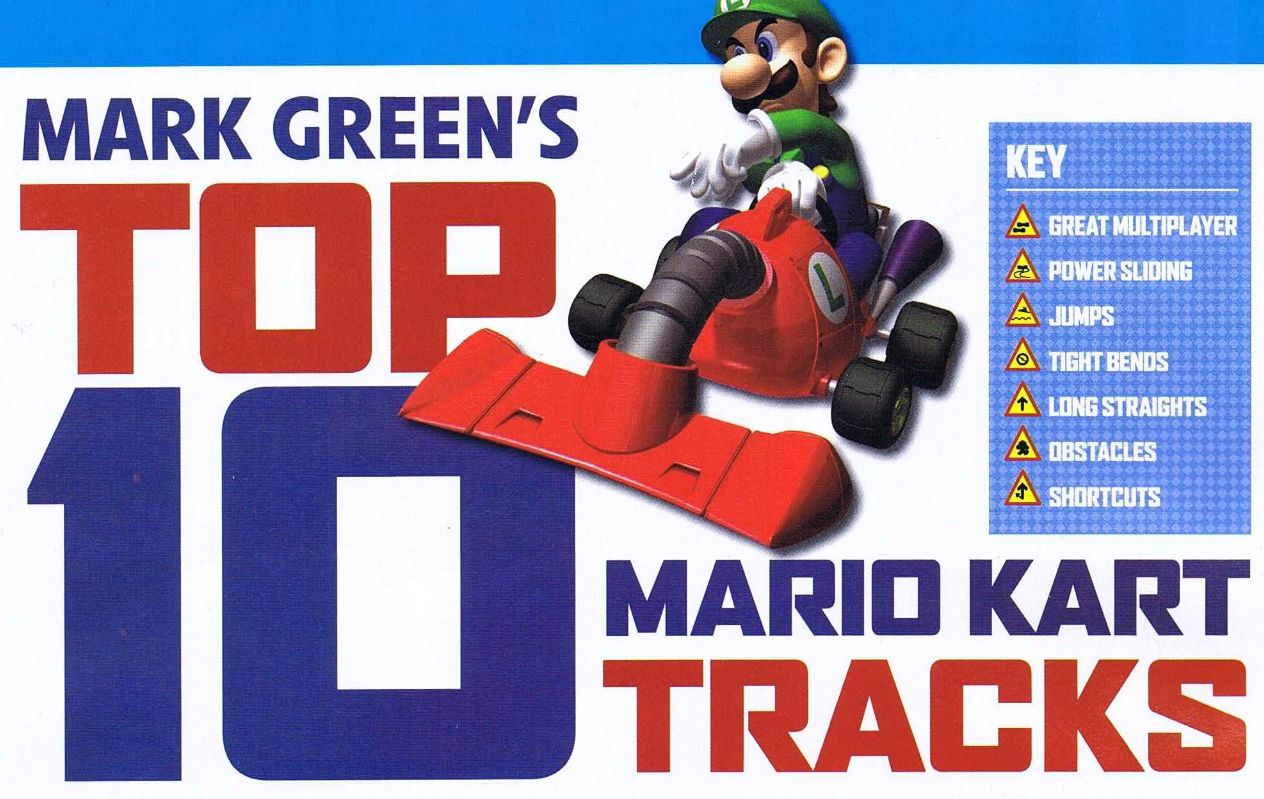
◁ Irene Glover of Chorley. Be afraid.

Δ Biraag Shah of Croydon. Zelda, Samus, Mario and, erm, Reggie?

∇ Tom Mullan of Margate. Of all the Marios, you had to choose the doctor...

The 'missed point' award goes to...

Δ Ryan Bowen of Harpenden. That bit's actually the screen...



MARK GREEN'S TOP 10 MARIO KART TRACKS

Discover the ten best-loved Nintendo driving experiences of a man who can't even drive...

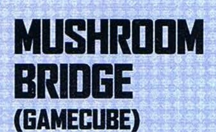
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BOWSER'S CASTLE 2
(SUPER NINTENDO)

This is the track that turned me on to the SNES. A game called *Xtreme Racing* on the Amiga home computer was a 'homage' to *Mario Kart* – and a very faithful homage it was too, right down to its lawyer-baiting homage to the track Bowser's Castle 2, which was called Forbidden Castle 2.

I soon realised that I was better off with the original. Its bends are as hairpin as you can get (literally – they're 180 degrees), and getting a single turn wrong puts you straight on the road to hell. Or at least the off-ramp to a short swim in some boiling hot lava. This track made me invent new swear words…

9



MUSHROOM BRIDGE
(GAMECUBE)

Essentially a retwizzling of the N64's Kinopio Highway, Mushroom Bridge proves you don't need anything fancier than a couple of sweeping turns and a tunnel to make karting come alive. The long straight leading up to the finish line gave me acute koopophobia (the fear of a red shell up the exhaust). It's also special for me as there's a bridge near where I lived that looks just like the one here. Only they've put gates up to stop people driving up the sides looking for speed strips.

8

MARIO CIRCUIT
(GAMECUBE)

Just like the man himself, Mario's tracks are usually short, ugly and hairy in all the wrong places. All I can remember about the N64 Mario Circuit is crying all over the joypad while trying to pull off the legendary wall-leaping shortcut.

Double Dash!! really broke the mould, and with Mario Circuit, it delivered a true hardcore karter's track, with hairpin bends, snapping Piranha Plants and wandering Goombas that manage to panic even the hardiest racer into binning their lead. I'd swear that Shigsy put the Chain Chomp there especially for me, just to make sure I get eaten if I try to powerslide all the way around the bend. Cheers for that!

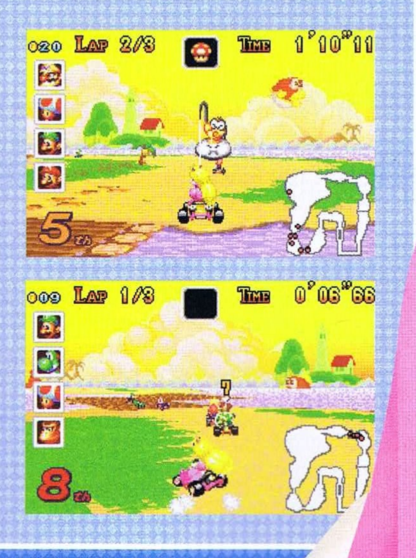


7

CHEEP CHEEP ISLAND
(GBA)

It's not until the old SNES tracks start pouring out of *Mario Kart Super Circuit* like coins from a fruit machine that things really pick up. As far as the normal tracks go, Cheep Cheep Island is the glittering jewel among a pretty dismal bunch of low-quality gold-plated rings. It reminds me of the brilliant beach track from *Konami Krazy Racing* – a game that's actually better than *Super Circuit*, controversy fans [You're wrong – Ed] – with sneaky routes through tyre-scuppering grass and the chance to (almost) make feathery death-pancakes out of seagulls. Just don't mention the crabs.





BOWSER'S CASTLE
(N64)




If you've ever screamed "Come ooooooon!" while punching your own thigh in frustration, you must have been watching your on-screen karter waste what must be days floating gently back to earth after a Thwomp squashing. That's just one of Bowser's little jokes on this course. There's also the cruel turn onto a narrow bridge overlooking a fiery death; the speed-sapping spiral staircase; and the risk of a shelling as you head up the crucial final ramp. It's one of the few Mario Kart courses I can still play all the way through in my head – and still get the sweats as I approach the Whomps *in my mind*.

6



RAINBOW ROAD
(SUPER NINTENDO)

4





My fondest *Super Mario Kart* memory. As in the kind of fondness I have for the painful red spot that keeps resprouting just under my left nostril. Rainbow Road pats you gently on the back with rousing, celebratory music, while simultaneously kicking you hard in the kidneys with a twisty-turny track that Shigsy stupidly forgot to put the safety barriers around.

There's no more than a kart's width of mistake space on at least one section, and enough Thwomps to make the Bowser's Castle tracks seem like a quiet drive around Tesco's car park. Took me weeks to beat it. *Weeks*, I tells ya.





5

PEACH GARDENS
(DS)





The novelty of Waluigi Pinball and Tick-Tock Clock wears thin after a few plays. Delfino Square is only a multiplayer favourite because half of *Mario Kart DS*'s best tracks apparently can't travel around in Wi-Fi sky clouds (or however the technology works). Peach Gardens does it for me, though. It's rife with mushrooming shortcut potential in those forehead-deep flowerbeds, and those hazard-filled mazes are classics of hold-your-breath twitch steering. And there I was promising myself I wouldn't let those irritating moles feature in my top ten. Turns out I lied to my own face.

DAISY CRUISER
(GAMECUBE)

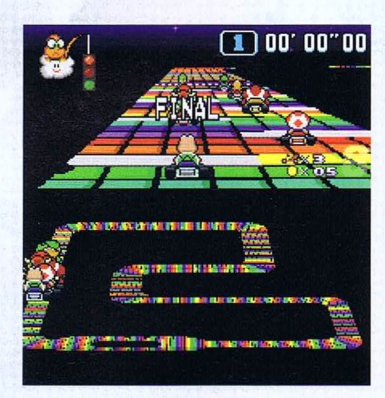
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A good *Mario Kart* track smears egg on the face of so-called experts. If you can imagine a pump-action hen, burst-firing messy ovulations as fast as a hen's rear-end permits, Daisy Cruiser is it.

Oh, I could show off with my bumpety-bump powerslide down that first staircase, but I'd be clenching my teeth with the rest of 'em when it came to dodging those sliding tables, or avoiding that tumble into the engine room. Make a fatal final lap error on this most tricky of tracks and you'll be proving that it's not just Bowser who can make steam come out of his nose…

THE BOTTOM THREE A trio of tracks that Greener hates as much as hairless cats



Rainbow Road (N64)
Someone, somewhere is going straight to hell for this. Your 'reward' for managing to hand seven cheat-o-matic N64-controlled karters their asses over 15 courses was this: six minutes of retina-scarringly colourful road, without one picosecond of excitement to be had on the way round – unless you count three brief encounters with Chain Chomps mysteriously half-buried in the track. It's true that the trackside lightshow put me pleasantly in mind of childhood trips to see Blackpool's illuminations, but otherwise, a suspended track with safety barriers all the way round? Play it in *F-Zero GX* to see what it could have been.

Choco Mountain (N64)
An uncomfortable and incredibly drab journey through what look like caverns made entirely out of poo, complete with tumbling rocks that nudge you off the track to a Wario Stadium-style death.

Cheese Land (GBA)
Unbelievably, this is actually some people's favourite *Mario Kart Super Circuit* course. But what is a world made of cheese doing in a *Mario Kart* game? That's what we say to people. Loudly and repeatedly. Until they wander off.

KOOPA TROOPA BEACH
(N64)



Like Daisy Cruiser, this track puts me straight into that feelgood summery vibe. For 27 seconds at least. That's exactly how long it takes to bag a mushroom or star, aim up the ramp towards the best (intentional) shortcut in *Mario Kart* history… and then clatter straight into the mountainside like a big four-wheeled motorised idiot.

Careless driving means no one is certain of making it into the tunnel. That, and the entire supermarket's worth of banana skins that are inevitably strewn on the ramp by lap three.

Crabs? I'm still not talking about them.



2

1

WARIO STADIUM
(N64)



You already know why. Sure, Wario's stadium is carved with a chisel of genius, with its big turns testing your ability to drive sideways through power-up clusters, and motocross-style bumps that seem designed to detach the one tyre you've got left clinging precariously to the racing line. In its day, that jerky jumbotron was quite the talking point at dinner parties. Or at children's birthday parties, at least.

But really, *that ramp*. *Mario Kart* has brought us 88 circuits spread over five different games, but only one of them throws you half a lap back as punishment for missing a jump. Forget bringing friendships to an end: Wario Stadium sparked several intercontinental wars as fourth-placers sneakily held off unleashing a shrinky-dinking Lightning Bolt until they were sure at least one karter would be sliding off into *Mario Kart* oblivion. Which is why the unspoken rule among the **NGC** team was to brake to 0mph on the Big Ramp and timidly wait for the Lightning bearer – and the threat – to pass. Wimps!

It's only right that Wario lends his name to a track so heartlessly evil. We wouldn't be surprised if he built the godforsaken thing with his own two hands. The big git.





MUSHROOM BRIDGE?!

So you reckon Greener must have been all giddied up on banana juice when he rated Daisy Cruiser as the third best *Mario Kart* course of all time? Or had his mind been struck by lightning when it came to rating Cheese Land as the third worst track? Well, now's your chance to put him right. Tell us what your favourite *Mario Kart* track is, from *Super Mario Kart*, *64*, *Super Circuit*, *Double Dash!!* or *DS*, and we'll print the best suggestions we receive.

Send your nominations to:
Mario Kart Madness, NGC Magazine, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW.
Alternatively, you can email us at: ngc@futurenet.co.uk

NIGHT TIME
X3 The Game promises to fill in several of the gaps left by *X3 The Movie's* storyline, such as exactly why Nightcrawler, one of the most popular X-Men, won't be putting in an appearance on your multiplex's big screen this time around.









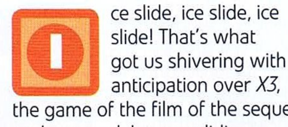
△ We've seen an awful lot of stealth over the last few years, so can Nightcrawler's sneakery get our juices flowing anew?

X-MEN 3

Get your genes on and freak out as Marvel's mutants get ready for their latest appearance on Gamecube…



△ This shadowy X-Man is more than just a Nightcrawler: he's a Night*croucher* too!



Ice slide, ice slide, ice slide! That's what got us shivering with anticipation over *X3*, the game of the film of the sequel to the sequel. Iceman sliding around the sky on his personal mid-air bobsleigh track – it's the very definition of cool.

This is just one part of the third-person action game that's making *X3* a very different beast to the X-Men fighting (*Next Dimension*) and RPGing (*Legends*) games that we're used to.

The spotlight's on Nightcrawler, Iceman and Wolverine. Their to-do lists are similar – run around a bit and disembowel the Brotherhood (the bad X-Men) – but each of them gets their own dedicated levels, and a very different style of play.

> "THE ACTION AND PILES OF BODIES SHOULD MAKE EVEN THE MOVIE ITSELF BLUSH"

THE KNOWLEDGE

- Take control of Wolverine, Nightcrawler and Iceman.
- Features characters and events from the movie and the comics.
- Co-written by Zak Penn, the screenwriter for the *X3* movie, and Chris Claremont, *X-Men* writer of some 16 years.

FACTFILE

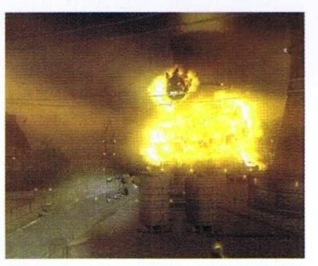
Who's making it?
Z-Axis

What have they done before?
BMX XXX (NGC/76, 48%)
Nipple-headed bike accident that made Z-Axis sorry they 'spoke'. *X3* should be far better.




△ You see? Ice slide rocks hardcore. Spider-Man had better learn some new tricks if he wants to stay our favourite superhero.

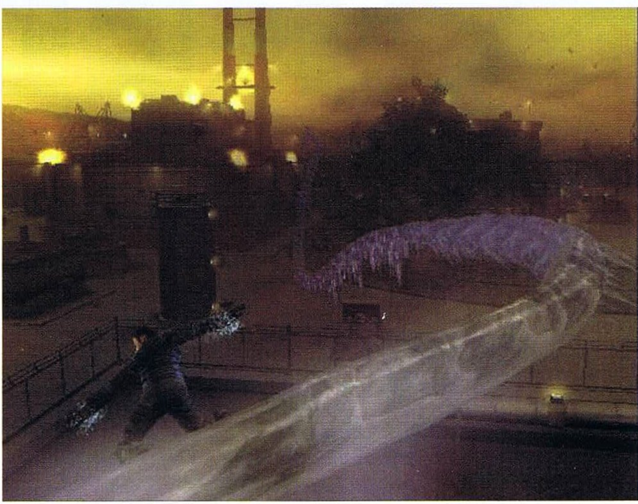




△ Just what Iceman doesn't need.




△ Someone's been at the Ribena.



△ Iceman's glistening skypaths of beautiful ice get us hot under the collar.



△ Meaty combat for you to sink your claws into.

So Nightcrawler shows off *Prince of Persia*-style acrobatics and his ability to 'BAMF' (that's 'teleport') around enemies, all thanks to a simple targeting system. Wolverine's levels, which see him settling old scores, are more combat-focused, letting you unleash a Fury Mode that'll see Sir Sideburns slicing and dicing like a hyena with a headcold. Finally, for Iceman's chunks, you're usually up against the clock as you bung ice beams about, rouse hailstorms and ice slide around vast, open areas.

Regardless of which freak you're fighting with, the effects-fuelled action and piles of Brotherhood bodies should make even the movie itself blush. Even Activision's feature-naming department has got the green light to go nuts – there's a Mutant Evolution System that upgrades your mutant powers as you go, and comicbook-style 'Hyberboard Cutscenes' that are the worst-named game gimmick since *The Godfather*'s 'Mobface'.

The *X3* team got their hands on Fox Movies' scripts, set designs and costumes, and the game intersects with both the films and the comics as it unravels the tale leading up to the movie. That means you get characters and locations from all three celluloid cash-spinners, and



△ One town ain't big enough for 'em.

locations that include the Statue of Liberty (from the first film), Dark Cerebro (from the second), and the X-Men's base at Alkali Lake. And there's the ice sliding too! We've got goosebumps…

NGC VERDICT



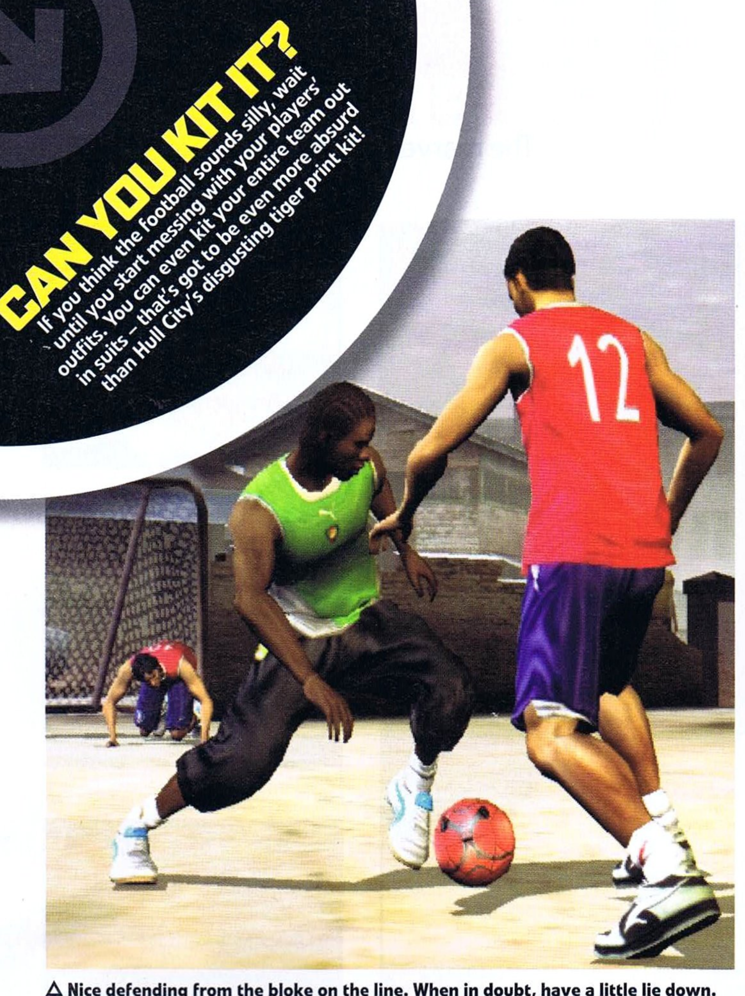


Bigger and ballsier than *X-Men Legends*, our only worry is whether the three-character system will dilute the experience. Still, stealth plus claw-handed combat *and* ice sliding sounds freakishly good.

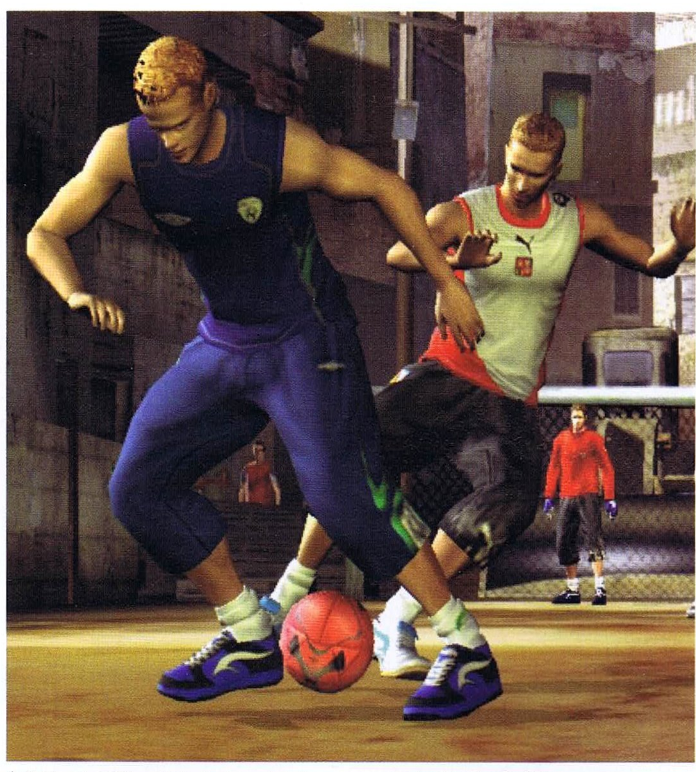
ANTICIPATION RATING



CAN YOU KIT IT?
If you think the football sounds silly, wait until you start messing with your players' outfits. You can even kit your entire team out in suits – that's got to be even more absurd than Hull City's disgusting tiger print kit!



△ Nice defending from the bloke on the line. When in doubt, have a little lie down.



△ Call us traditionalists, but we don't approve of playing football in vests.

FIFA STREET 2

The most ridiculous thing to hit the world of football since the Harry Redknapp saga…

This is going to be even more outrageous than *Mario Smash Football*. Okay, so there won't be any monkeys on the pitch, but the new Gamebreaker system is even more unbelievable than Mario's super shots.

As in the last game, if you pull off plenty of skill moves, you'll build up your Gamebreaker meter, and when it's fully charged, your player will unleash the ultimate trick combo. If you remember a Super Shot in *Mario Smash Football*, you'll know that it was worth two goals. However, the bar has been raised here – if you beat one player and score when your meter is full, not only will you score a goal, but it will also result in a goal being taken away from the opposing team.

That's not all, though. Beat two players and you'll get two goals, three players and you'll be awarded three goals, and if you beat the whole team and score, you'll win the game on the spot. It's as if the rules of football have been rewritten by JK Rowling.

Actually, it's probably got more to do with the fact that *FIFA Street 2* is being developed by some of the same people who worked on *NBA Street*, and as we know, they don't hold back when it comes to over-the-top skill moves.

Thanks to the eight-way directional controls, there are more fancy flicks and tricks than before. For example, press L with the C-stick when you receive the ball and your player will flick it up and start juggling with it. Even better, you can keep the ball in the air while running up the pitch, beating defenders and then slamming it into the net. It's like every player on your team is Ronaldinho, which can be really satisfying.

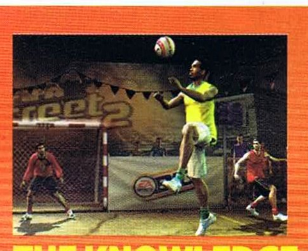
Despite some funny new features, from what we've seen so far, *FIFA Street 2* plays slightly better than its predecessor. Whereas before it was a bit too slow for those used to the other games in the *Street* series, the passing is now silky smooth and the animations are spot on, which means you can play some fast-paced five-a-side matches against some of the world's best players.

In this respect, maybe our opening claim that this could be more outrageous than *Mario Smash Football* might be taking things just a little bit too far – at least in this game you won't be playing against a gorilla who shoots with his giant monkey fists…

"YOU CAN KEEP THE BALL IN THE AIR WHILE RUNNING. IT'S LIKE EVERY PLAYER IS RONALDINHO"



△ A salmon-coloured ball? You'd be too embarrassed to take that out…



THE KNOWLEDGE

- **Play street football with over 320 pro players hailing from 20 different countries.**
- **Not only is there a huge create-a-player mode, but you can also design your own pitch.**
- **Learn over 300 different skill moves on the Trick Stick (or, in other words, the C-stick)**

FACTFILE

Who's making it?
EA Big

What have they done before?
NBA Street V3 (NGC/104, 90%)
Over-the-top basketball game with special guest appearances from Mario and friends.

JUMPERS FOR GOALPOSTS

Well, not quite, but that's the beauty of football – you can play it anywhere, and these pitches from around the world reflect that. You can play on the beach, in alleyways and even under flyovers.



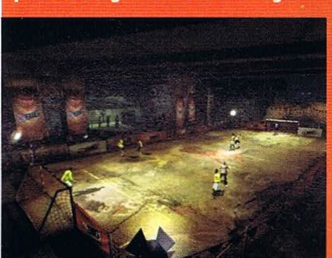
LONDON

Of all the locations you could play football in London, EA has put a pitch under the Westway, a hideous flyover in the west of the city. We'd have preferred a game on Tower Bridge.



AMSTERDAM

We really like this pitch, if only for the fact that it's in the shadow of the amazing Amsterdam Arena, home of the once mighty Ajax and the Dutch national team.



MARSEILLE

This isn't exactly what you imagine when you think of the French Riviera, but, unbelievably, this is Marseille, home town of Real Madrid's fantastic Zinedine Zidane.



BERLIN

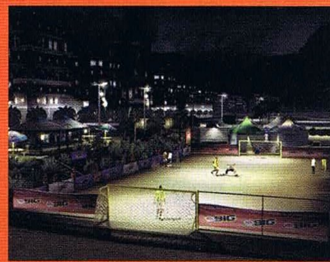
Thankfully, the World Cup Final is being played in a slightly more glamorous part of Berlin than this. There aren't even any floodlights here – the pitch is lit by lamps.



ROME

Unlike most other pitches, this really *is* street football as you have a kickabout in the cobbled alleys of Rome. There are no basketball markings in sight either.



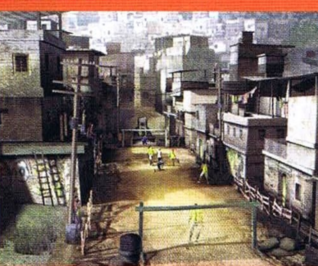


BARRA BEACH

This is exactly how we're led to believe that Brazilians learn to play football – by having a kickabout on the beach. We've tried it, but just got sand in our eyes.

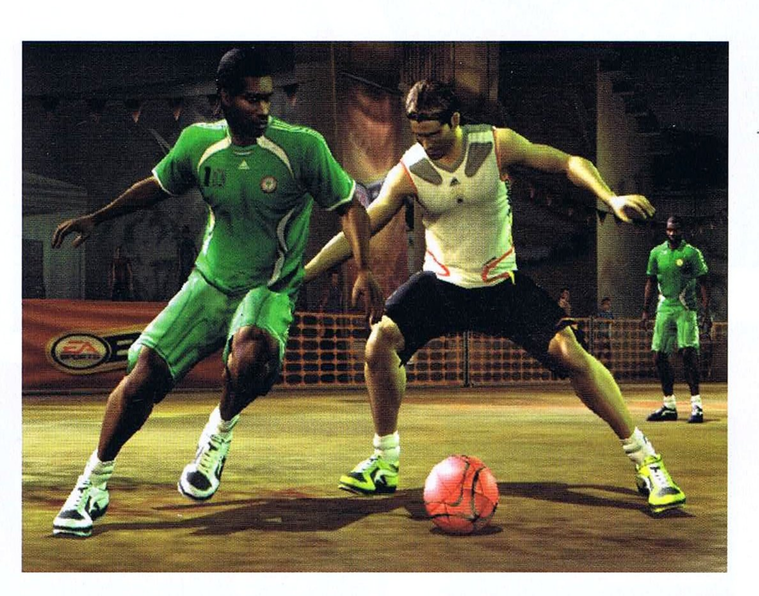
NEW YORK

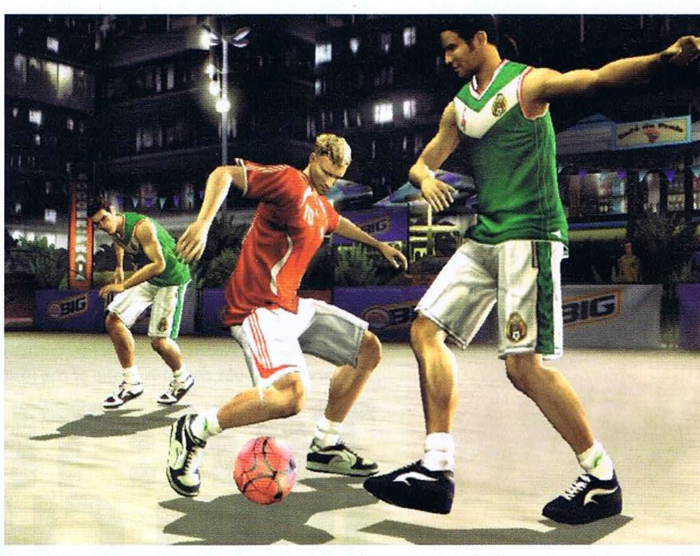
This looks more like a court from *NBA Street V3* than a football pitch. Mario and Peach are probably in the showers after a tough game of b-ball. Or maybe not.



FAVELA

For those who aren't aware, a Favela is a Brazilian hillside slum. Bet the residents would love to have a load of rich people kicking footballs against their front doors…





△ Street football or an audition for Strictly Come Dancing? We can't work it out.



△ Some quality showboating.



△ Nice bit of ball juggling.



△ A slidey on concrete? Nutter!





'Proper' *FIFA* games used to be about fast-paced end-to-end arcade action, but when EA tried to match Konami's *Pro Evolution Soccer* series, it lost the heart of what was a decent arcade game. So what we have is an over-the-top football romp that some might find ridiculous, but is actually quite a lot of fun to play, especially in Multiplayer mode.

ANTICIPATION RATING









TAK AND THE HISTORY OF 3D PLATFORM GAMES

As Mr Mark Green just pointed out, 2006 marks the *tenth anniversary* of the original 3D platformer, *Super Mario 64*. Corky! We remember when it was all fields round here.







THE KNOWLEDGE

- **New split-screen co-op mode.**
- **It's a platformer. The probability that you'll not only jump from one thing to the other but also have to collect things is currently running at 100%. This is unlikely to change.**
- **You can hit a baby rhino with a stick. You can even throw it off a cliff, right in front of its mother. Which is kind of funny.**

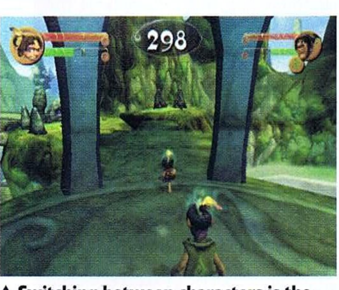


There's no doubt that this is one of the best-looking platformers we've seen.

FACTFILE

Who's making it?
THQ

What have they done before?
Tak and the Power of Juju (NGC/92, 69%)
The original Tak game, and it wasn't too bad either.



Switching between characters is the key to progressing in the game.

TAK: THE GREAT JUJU CHALLENGE

It Taks two to tango…

You could practically taste the indifference in the air when this turned up, but surprisingly, after half an hour of play, we found that it's not as bad as we expected.

No matter what you might think of the character or the whole Tak thing itself, you really can't deny that this looks lovely, with beautiful background art, delicate pastel shades, detailed and solid environments, and well-designed character models. It even boasts pretty strong voice work, it all hangs together well and there really isn't any cause for complaint.

As for the actual game? Well, as you'd expect, it's pretty short on imagination. There's a whole world of repetitive combat, simplistic puzzles and tedious leaping from one platform to the next. In fairness, THQ is taking it down a slightly different road, with each level forming a challenge that needs to be completed in the fastest possible time. You do this through co-operation with your partner, something that's emphasised by their special skills. Tak, for example, can swim, while his partner can't.

> **"YOU REALLY CAN'T DENY THAT THIS LOOKS LOVELY, WITH BEAUTIFUL BACKGROUND ART"**

In single-player, this amounts to a fairly dull process of switching characters. However, when you play split-screen with a mate, it speeds up the whole process and actually makes the game a whole lot more enjoyable.

NGC VERDICT



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With a mate, this is solid, enjoyable platforming fun, with the only thing that annoyed us being the second jump in the tutorial. It took us over 20 goes to do it, simply because of the bizarre timing and gliding mechanic. Other than that, we found it strangely enjoyable. A bit brainless thus far, admittedly, but still decent enough fun.

ANTICIPATION RATING







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WALLPAPERS



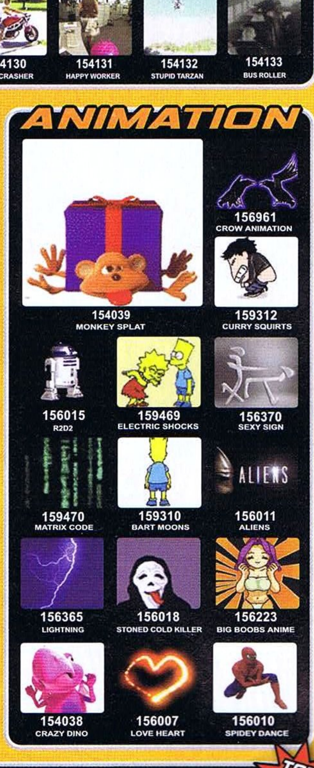
VIDEO



MORE COOL PICS

156564 · 156577 · 156575 · 156576 · 159626 · 159900 · 154070 · 154035 · 156201 · 156204 · 156151 · 156153 · 156989 · 156918 · 156136 · 159955 · 159887 · 159865 · 159876 · 159770 · 159459 · 156998 · 156029

ANIMATION



TONES



POLY LATEST

151421	U2 - ALL BECAUSE OF YOU
151423	FEEDER - SHATTER
151433	MAXIMO PARK - APPLY SOME PRESSURE
151026	DR DRE FEAT EMINEM - FORGOT ABOUT DRE
151212	WILL YOUNG - SWITCH IT ON
151410	KAISER CHIEFS - MODERN WAY
151412	MADONNA - HUNG UP
151448	SIMON WEBB - NO WORRIES
151439	THE DARKNESS - ONE WAY TICKET TO HELL AND BACK
151407	GREEN DAY - JESUS OF SUBURBIA
151427	ARCTIC MONKEYS - I BET YOU LOOK GOOD.
151447	SON OF DORK - TICKET OUTTA LOSERVILLE
151411	KANYE WEST - HEAR EM SAY
151435	BLACK EYED PEAS - MY HUMPS
151378	KANYE WEST - GOLD DIGGER
151365	THE PUSSYCAT DOLLS - DON'T CHA
151385	SUGABABES - PUSH THE BUTTON
151440	PHARRELL - CAN I HAVE IT LIKE THAT

TRUETONE LATEST

158285	KAISER CHIEFS - MODERN WAY
158286	MADONNA - HUNG UP
158292	ARCTIC MONKEYS - I BET YOU LOOK GOOD...
158296	GOLDFRAPP - NUMBER ONE
158332	PHARRELL - CAN I HAVE IT LIKE THAT
158333	THE DARKNESS - ONE WAY TICKET TO HELL AND BACK
158319	THE PUSSYCAT DOLLS - DON'T CHA
158323	SUGABABES - PUSH THE BUTTON
158309	FRANZ FERDINAND - WALK AWAY
158310	SEAN PAUL - EVER BLAZIN
158314	KANYE WEST - HEAR EM SAY
158317	BLACK EYED PEAS - MY HUMPS
158318	KANYE WEST - GOLD DIGGER
158331	MYLO - DOCTOR PRESSURE
158265	U2 - ALL BECAUSE OF YOU
158288	GREEN DAY - JESUS OF SUBURBIA

REAL SOUNDS

158135	DUKES OF HAZZARD - GENERAL LEE
158138	FULL METAL JACKET - DRILL SARGEANT "DO YOU SUCK...?"
158124	FULL METAL JACKET - 'YOU'RE SO UGLY'
158061	AUSTIN POWERS - YOU'VE GOT MAIL BABY
158056	DONALD DUCK GETTING A BJ (HILARIOUS)
158051	PULP FICTION - THE PATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS MAN
158047	BO SELECTA MICHAEL JACKSON - SHAAMONE
158045	BACK TO THE FUTURE - SERIOUS S***
158060	MONKEY GOING NUTS
158066	STAR WARS - JABBA'S LAUGH
158063	FRIENDS - JOEY - HOW YOU DOIN'?

GAMES

COMPATIBILITY: A: NOKIA B: MOTOROLA C: SAGEM D: SAMSUNG E: SHARP F: SIEMENS G: SONY ERICSSON

TOP GAME



CONFLICT VIETNAM — ABCDEFG — 156505



LIMIT TEXAS HOLD'EM — ABDFG — 156816



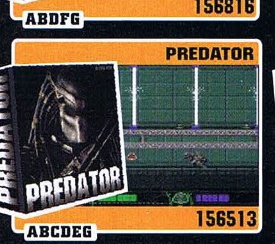
SUPER YUM YUM — ACDEFG — 156805

SENSIBLE SOCCER — ABCEG — 156514



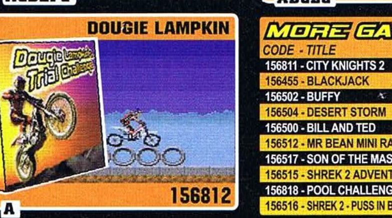
BABEWATCH — ABDFG — 156492







PREDATOR — ABCDEG — 156513



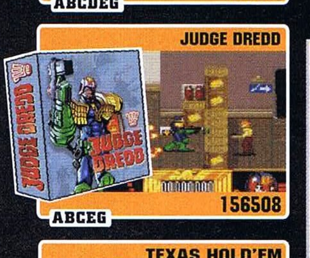
DOUGIE LAMPKIN — A — 156812



MORE GAMES

CODE - TITLE	COMPATIBILITY
156811 - CITY KNIGHTS 2	A,B,G
156455 - BLACKJACK	A,B,D,F
156502 - BUFFY	A,B,C,D,E,G
156504 - DESERT STORM	A,B,C,D,E,F,G
156500 - BILL AND TED	A,B,C,D,E,G
156512 - MR BEAN MINI RACER	A,B,C,D,E,F
156517 - SON OF THE MASK	A,B,C,D,G
156515 - SHREK 2 ADVENTURE	A.B.E.G
156818 - POOL CHALLENGE	A
156516 - SHREK 2 - PUSS IN BOOTS	A,B,C,D,E,F,G

SON OF THE MASK — ABCDG — 156517



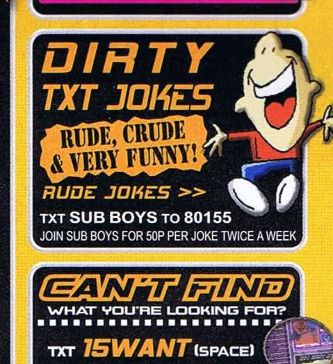
JUDGE DREDD — ABCEG — 156508

BRUCE LEE — ABCDEG — 156501



TEXAS HOLD'EM — ABG — 156808

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OUR PROMISE Our reviewers are the most talented and knowledgeable Nintendo fans in the business. We don't only play games at work – we play them at home too, just like you. We ensure that we've played games through to the end so that we can give you a proper verdict – and one that saves you from wasting money.

NGC THE VERDICT YOU DESERVE!

REVIEWS



MARIO & LUIGI PARTNERS IN CRIME

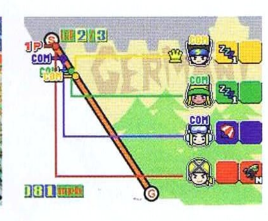
What a way to start the year. Massive eight page review of the funniest, most inventive Mario game since *Superstar Saga*. Get the full verdict over on... P24

SNOWBOARD KIDS

One of NGC's best-loved N64 racers gets an update on DS - and it's not half bad... P32







PLUS!

PAC-MAN WORLD 3

Third DS outing for the yellow fellow P36

NARUTO: RISE OF NINJA

Actually quite decent anime fighter... P40

POKÉMON DUNGEON

Random dungeoneering, only this time, you're the Pokemon. Odd. P44

BATTLES OF PRINCE OF PERSIA

Cards, princes and, um Persia. It might just work. P48

BURNOUT LEGENDS

Surely, *surely* this will be the racer we've all been holding out for... P52

FINAL FANTASY IV

GBA remake of the SNES original, with some new stuff too. Nice. P60

OUR SCORING SYSTEM

0-24 Crushingly awful, massively dull. Rest assured this game is absolute crud.

25-49 A disappointing title, stashed with nasty faults and likely to be short on any quality.

50-74 Some great bits, some not-so great bits. Decent but definitely problems.

75-89 Great fun, brilliantly programmed at times, but probably flawed.

90+ Rarely awarded, a 90+ is essential. Buy with confidence.

NGC STAR GAME

MEET THE NGC TEAM

So, if you invaded the Mushroom Kingdom, what would you do?



TOM E
I'd melt down Slippy Slidey bloody Ice World to start with and then execute Birdo for crimes against humanity.



MARTIN
Make Peach's Castle my new home. Impose a hot-pants only dress code for all Princesses, and , um, raise taxes. Probably.



GERAINT
Ban plumbers from taking part in any sporting activities. Strictly enforced by the threat of capital punishment for offenders.



GREENER
Fill in all crevices and chasms with cement. That whole place is just an accident waiting to happen...



DAVE
Introduce Yoshi Hunting with hounds in the Donut Plains, and get to the bottom of that disgraceful 'Mama Peach' scandal...



STEVE
I'd make Peach and Daisy eat Choco Mountain. At least that way I'd never have to see that tedious brown dump ever again.



"Another cracking adventure"

MARIO AND LUIGI PARTNERS IN TIME

Mario kicks off the year in style with yet another cracking adventure…

NGC STAR GAME

MARIO & LUIGI: PARTNERS IN TIME

Past perfect RPG romp



△ Kamek, Baby Bowser's long-suffering babysitter, makes a welcome comeback and has some pretty amusing lines of his own.



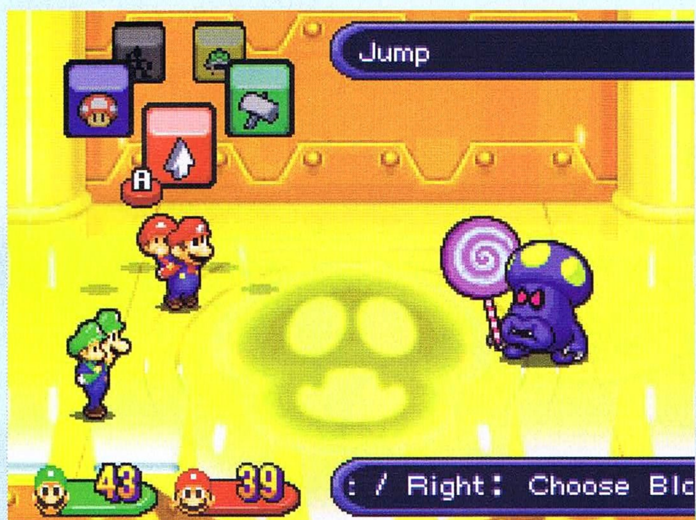
△ Race to the top as fast as you can.



△ Little tunnels are the babies' forte.



△ Items do the most damage.



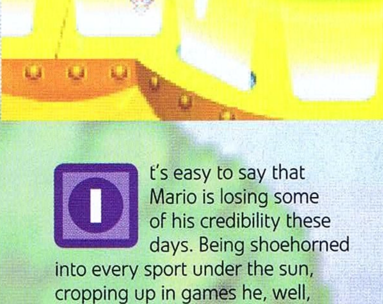


INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	ALPHA DREAM
RELEASE DATE	FEB 10TH
PLAYERS	1
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	NO
WI-FI	NO
MIC	NO
PRICE	£35







It's easy to say that Mario is losing some of his credibility these days. Being shoehorned into every sport under the sun, cropping up in games he, well, shouldn't be cropping up in, and inviting us to the same god-awful 'party' he's been throwing for the last seven years isn't doing his reputation any favours. It's about time he sorted himself out – got himself back on track and checked himself in for rehab at a good old-fashioned fun clinic.

So if the likes of recent *Mario Party* travesties are part of the problem then what better remedy than *Partners in Time*, a sequel to the excellent *Superstar Saga* on GBA, and possibly one of the best Mario games in recent years? It starts well – very well. Hell, even the opening and title screen are enough to fill you with

"EVEN THE OPENING AND TITLE SCREEN ARE ENOUGH TO FILL YOU WITH CONFIDENCE"

"Start widening the rectum"





△ The bosses prove to be the toughest part of the game.

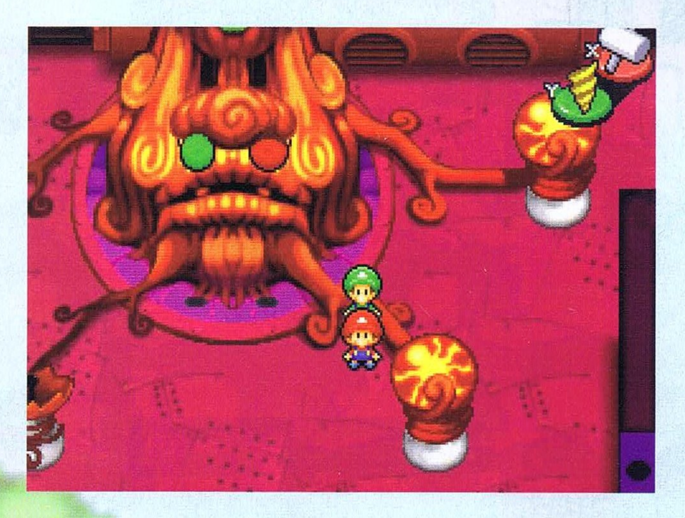


△ First Kong, then Bowser, now a bunch of Shroobs? That Peach is a bloody liability! Mario should lock her up and throw away the key.



POINTS OF VIEW

One of the best uses of the dual screens is the way they often show two perspectives of the same event. Here, a giant Yoshi is trying to eat the brothers, who have climbed up to the top of this tower. In one view you can see the giant Yoshi scaling the tower itself, and on the other you can see the brothers desperately trying to avoid its sticky, probing tongue…





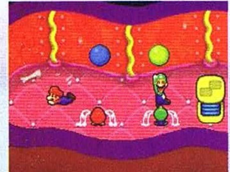
△ The babies can walk on clouds.

confidence, with its jaunty, well-arranged opening theme and a wonderfully playful introductory story. It all feels perfectly Mario – colourful, impeccably presented silliness of the highest order, and you'll instantly feel at home.

So it's business as usual in Mushroom Kingdom past. Kind of. The baby brothers are getting down to the all-too familiar task of battling Bowser (on another Peach-napping mission to the Princess's throne room) and old Toadsworth is doing his best to placate the little Princess – but there's evil afoot. From a distant planet (in a War of the Worlds style), alien 'Shroobs' are looking to set up permanent residence in the

THE BROTHERS GONNA WORK IT OUT

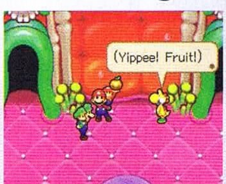
A quick walkthrough of one of the game's more imaginative moments...



Mario and Luigi find themselves trapped inside the belly of a giant Shroobs-infected Yoshi and need to find a way out. Nearby is a jump pad that can only be used by the lighter babies.



Up on the top floor, the babies find a Yoshi trying to roll a giant cookie down the giant Yoshi's colon. He's gonna need some help from the other Yoshi's trapped inside the stomach.



Some Yoshi's are easier to find that others – this one needs some fruit before he's well enough to push the cookie. Others are going to be just a little bit harder to get, so start exploring...



Each of the pockets in the giant Yoshi stomach acts as a little puzzle. In this case, the babies on the top view have to match the colour lines on the bottom screen by using their hammer.



This puzzle is great. Fill baby Mario up with water on the top screen and get baby Luigi to smack him with a hammer, sending drops down below and hopefully taking out the guarding spaceship.

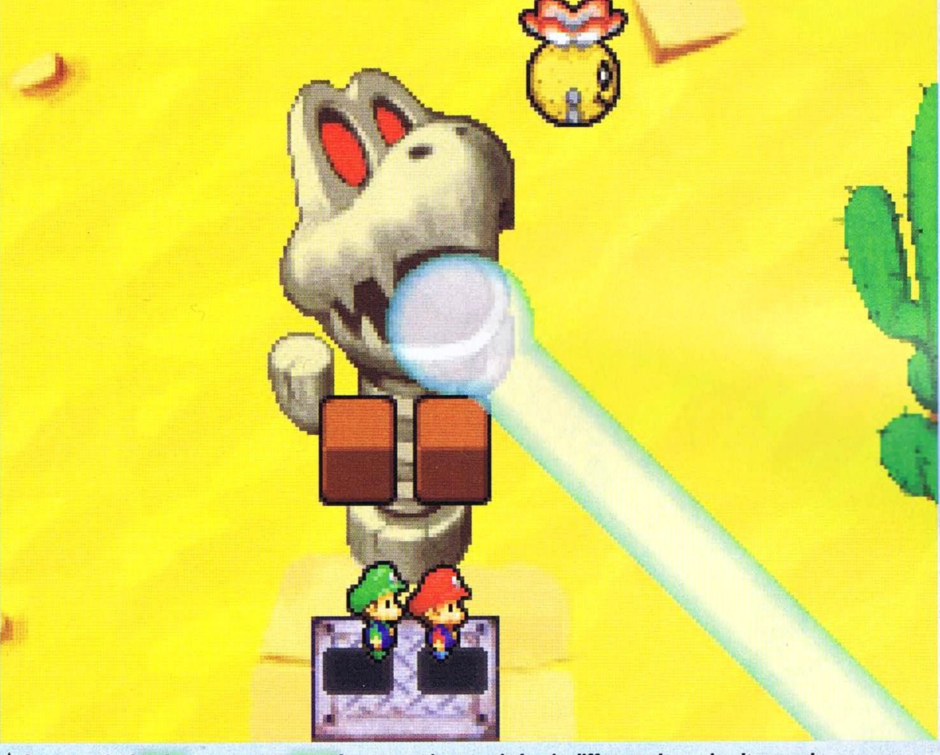


With all the Yoshis now pushing the cookie, it can drop through the hole and start widening the rectum (now there's something you don't hear every day), and so the brothers can escape.





△ When piggybacked, the babies join in the battles.



△ Separate the brothers across a map and you can trigger switches in different places simultaneously.

Mushroom Kingdom. They attack and start kidnapping the Toads so they can suck all the shroom juice out of them for their own nefarious gains. Unfortunately, all this coincides with the Peach of the present's excursion into the past, via a time machine created by *Luigi's Mansion*'s Professor Gadd – and when it returns to the present minus one Princess, the adult brothers have to hop back in time to retrieve her. Cue another RPG adventure, although perhaps unusually given the theme of the game, one with little in the way of past/present time paradoxes. It's actually much more straightforward than that.

In order to get the Princess back, the game relies on a tried and tested (and you could say somewhat disappointing) Star Shard hunt, something that's getting a touch familiar these days. Each shard of the star is hidden away in dungeons in the past, which are accessed through various time holes that pop up in Peach's Castle in the present. This acts as the game's main hub, where most of the story progresses, and you can heal up and buy new items and so on. Each time hole takes you to specific regions in the past that need to be traversed, the dungeon explored and the boss defeated.

Which really brings us to our only criticism of *Partners in Time*. While it is an RPG, it never feels particularly epic. There's no overworld to explore, for example (it's effectively divided up into a series of very linear levels), there's not a great deal of NPC interaction, and it all feels a somewhat restricted. More so than *Superstar*

"SHROOBS KIDNAP THE TOADS SO THEY CAN SUCK ALL THE SHROOM JUICE OUT OF THEM"



MEAN BEAN MACHINE

There's a Magic Bean-collecting side quest. These can be found by looking for little 'X' marks on the ground. When you've found one, you can use the babies to tunnel under them before jumping out, bursting the bean out of the ground. These beans can be traded in for special items.



"There's a great deal to like here"

SMOOTH MOVES

Aside from the standard jump move, each brother has his own set of distinct skills.



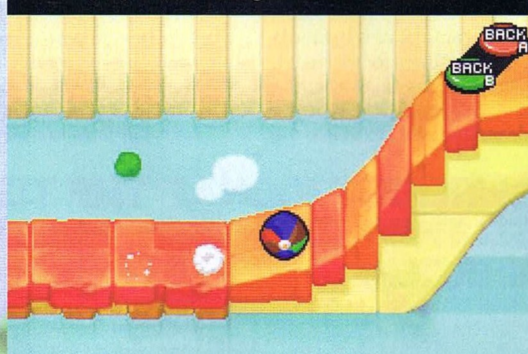
■ **DRILL** Baby Luigi can hop onto baby Mario's head and spin. This sends the hammer-wielding Mario into the earth, which is great for slipping under gates or getting buried items.



■ **SPIN** This is the same move as the one from *Superstar Saga*. Luigi jumps onto Mario's head and spins, allowing the adult brothers to cover large distances in a single leap.



■ **HAMMER** The babies' first main move. It's invaluable for some puzzles, smashing blocks or defeating enemies that can't be jumped on. It's also great for counterattacks.



■ **ROLL** Mario goes Samus on us. Both Mario and Luigi can roll up into a ball. This allows them to operate certain machines, move faster than before (especially when going uphill) and even squeeze through small gaps.





COMMAND AND CONQUER

Tactical battles that push all the right buttons…



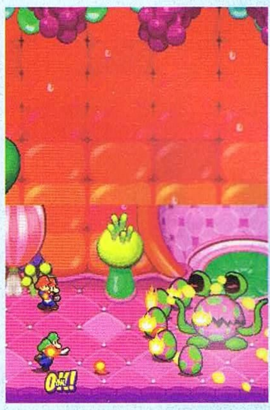
If you thought some of the Action commands in Paper Mario or Superstar were a bit much then you're in for a shock. With four brothers to contend with (each with his own face button) there's a staggering array of new moves.



The most important skill is the counterattack. Enemies actually deal a lot of damage, but if you time jumps and Hammer attacks correctly, you can either avoid any damage, or even deal some back on an opponent's turn.



The attacks are where things get trickier. The simple Jump attack, for example, can deal four hits worth of damage over each of the brothers' two turns, with both the babies and the adults sticking the boot in.



Each of the game's items also has its own Action commands. These can be quite tricky to master as they all involve different timings and combinations of button presses. If you fail, you'll often deal out hardly any damage at all.



Thankfully, there's the very useful Training Badge. When equipped, you have an infinite supply of items to try, although they barely do any damage. It's best to use this early on, when it's a bit easier, so you can get some practice in.

Saga, at least, and certainly more than *The Thousand Year Door*. However, despite *Partners in Time*'s more regimented approach to adventuring, there's a great deal to love here.

First and foremost, like every other *Mario* RPG, it manages to inject something a little special into the genre. The Action commands from *Paper Mario* and *Saga*, for example, are back with a vengeance. These are the little button prompts that help the turn-based battles maintain your interest. However, in *Partners in Time*, there's a great deal more than usual to get to grips with. You have the standard Jump, Hammer and Item attacks, and the strength of these can be boosted by hitting the correct buttons (corresponding to each brother) at the correct time. It can often feel a little tricky and frustrating having to memorise the required button presses, timing and enemy attack patterns, especially as

"LIKE EVERY OTHER MARIO RPG, IT MANAGES TO INJECT SOMETHING A LITTLE SPECIAL"



SAY WHAT?

We love the speech in this. Whether it's Mario's babbling, Luigi's stupid voice or the babies' super cute "Tinky Birry Mach" ("Thank you very much"), it's spot on and guaranteed to make you smile. Just make sure you do yourself a favour and turn your headphones down when Baby Peach starts crying.



△ You need to use different skills to reach different time holes.



△ As ever, Boos stand still if you look at them. Great for avoiding battles.

SUPER CUSTOM BROS

Your party – just the way you want it…



■ Something that's going to be instantly familiar with anyone who's played previous Mario RPGs is the Badge system. These items have a number of different effects, from boosting EXP earned to more unusual effects, such as earning items back from battles.



■ You can't really grind in *Partners*. While there are a few respawning enemies, there's nothing particularly useful for power levelling. The balance of the game is pretty steady and you can't make yourself super-powerful just by crunching through numbers. There is a smart bonus system though.



■ Every time you level up, you get points attributed to the usual kind of areas, such as speed, defence, power, HP and so forth. However, you also get to roll for bonus points in an area of your choice. This means you have the opportunity to decide how your team of brothers develops over time.

△ These Boos are annoying because they nick your battle items.

there are so many of them, but getting it right feels hugely rewarding as you deliver damage above and beyond what you would normally deal out. It's an excellent incentive for making you concentrate and take notice of what's going on in each battle. As a result, you feel far more involved than in other similar RPGs (*Lunar Genesis*, we're looking at you here) that just make you want to sit back and get the whole tedious battling process over and done with as soon as you possibly can.

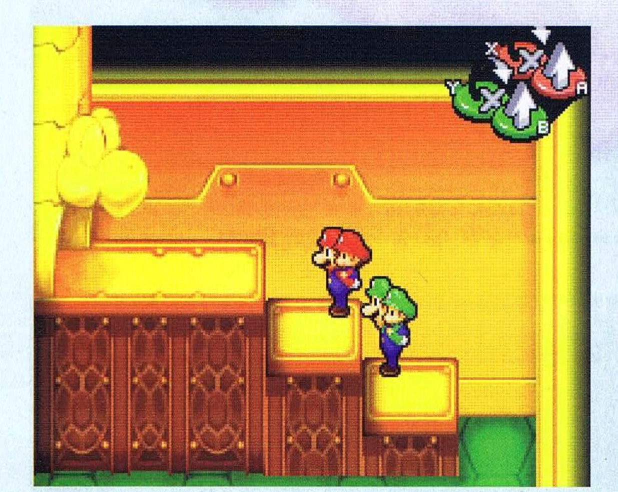
Exploring dungeons is also a much more engrossing experience. Rather than having a big maze full of monsters, you have a finite amount of enemies, and you have a new puzzle to solve in each room, each one more cunning and inventive than the last. The result is a series of dungeons that are not only truly memorable, but that also manage to remain interesting and engaging throughout – and there aren't many RPGs out there capable of that boast.

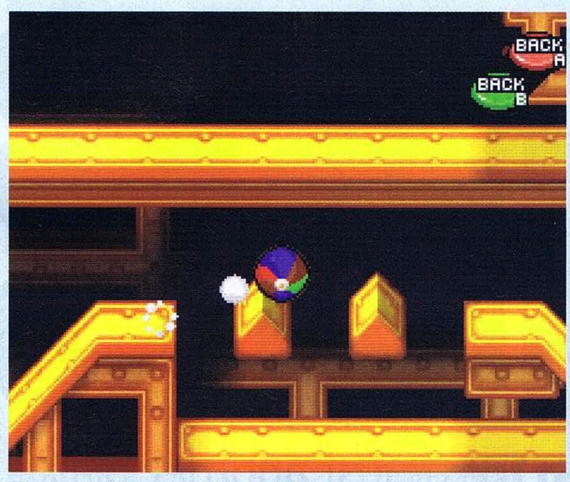
This is mainly down to the brilliant use of the dual screens. Each puzzle and scenario really makes full use of the system, more


△ The brothers have to find a way into the central dome in order to find the Princess.

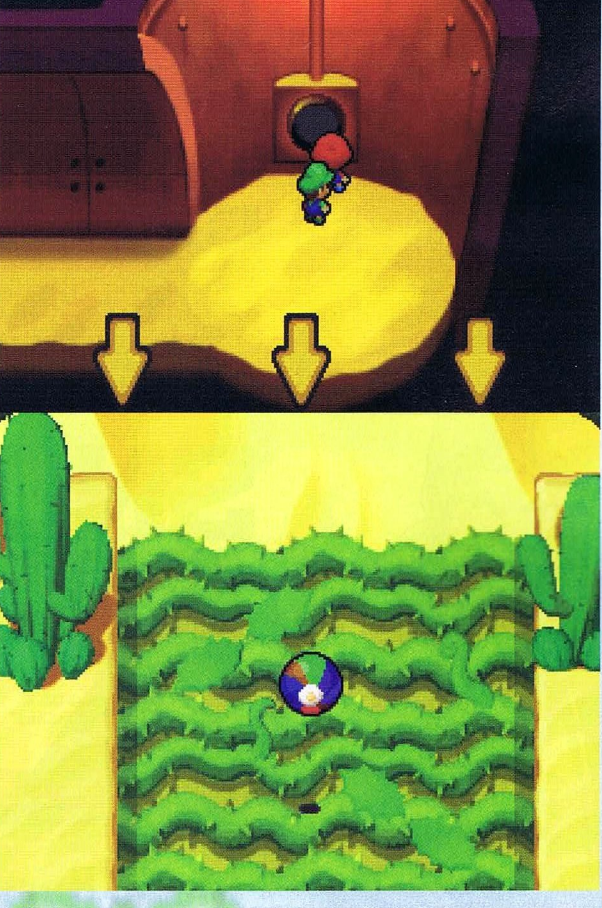

△ In order to do this, they have to split up across the map so they can trigger switches.


△ These activate four Dry-Bones eye lasers that unlock the protected door mechanism.





△ Mario and Luigi go for a bit of *Metroid*-style action.


△ The babies use a cannon to shoot the morphballed brothers over a gap.

so than any other game we've seen so far. They require you to shift your attention back and forth between the two to solve particular problems, and in some cases you need to keep your eye on both screens simultaneously.

In one section, for example, you have to use the adult brother below to knock eggs out of glass boxes so they pop up on the screen above. Once in mid-air, you have to get the baby brothers on the top screen to shoot the egg out of the air, freeing the trapped Yoshi inside.

With each and every dungeon, you face more and more smart little puzzles of this kind in action, and it's hard not to find yourself nodding and smiling in appreciation of the cleverness of it all.

WE MUST OBEY ALL ORDERS. WE LIKE 2 PWN NOOBS 4 TEH MASTER SHROOBZORS.

L33T SP34K
This scene early on in the game had us laughing just a bit too hard for our liking, and it's just one example of the quality of the dialogue throughout. Admittedly, it's never quite 'Mustard of Doom' (Superstar fans) but every cutscene never ceases to raise a smile, even in the most jaded of Mario fans. Brilliant.

So, technically, it's a sound little RPG (and we do mean little – it's gonna last you 15-20 hours tops), but just like its predecessors, it's not so much the mechanics of the game that make it so appealing. Rather, it's the innate Mario-ness of it all; the personality and charm it exudes. Mario games rarely have this these days – he's just a mascot, a face that's plastered onto something. *Partners in Time* is different because it really explores his world. It milks it dry for in-jokes, poking fun at itself and the game world that's now so familiar to anyone who's grown up with his games. It's almost like a little bit of fan service for those of us who've craved a Mario adventure that does him justice – and coming so soon after the amazing *Mario Kart DS*, it's all we could have asked for.

"EACH PUZZLE REALLY MAKES FULL USE OF THE SYSTEM, MORE THAN ANY OTHER GAME"

GERAINT EVANS



- So, so funny.
- Inventive puzzles.
- Best use of dual screens so far.



- A little linear.
- A little bit too easy.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...
Paper Mario and The Thousand Year Door
Nintendo
NGC/100 91%
A sizeable Mario RPG with a terrific art style. It's not as funny as *Superstar Saga*, mind you…



8 VISUALS
Crisp, clear and expressive, if not amazingly detailed.

10 SOUNDS
Perfect. Infectious, happy tunes with hilarious samples.

8 MASTERY
Undoubtedly the best use of the dual screens so far.



7 LIFESPAN
It's not as long as *Paper Mario* and it's pretty easy.

VERDICT
Doesn't last long, but it's still an inventive and laugh-out-loud funny RPG. The perfect start to the new year for Mario.







△ Ha ha! Loser! There's nothing like a game that lets you know, in screen-filling letters, exactly how useless you really are...



△ This wide stretch of moguls put us in mind of *1080° Snowboarding* – now that'd be a great DS game...





SNOWBOARD KIDS

Mario Kart on ice or just another blast from the past? It's N64 time on DS...



INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	ATLUS
DEVELOPER	ATLUS
RELEASE DATE	NOW (US)
PLAYERS	1-4
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	YES
WI-FI	NO
MIC	YES
COST	$30 (£17)

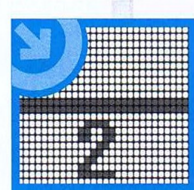
Back in early 1998, when *Snowboard Kids* showed up on the game-starved N64, it had a certain charm that outweighed its most obvious flaws. Yes, it was the slowest racing game we'd ever seen, and no, it wasn't the prettiest. Also, you could only race against a maximum of three other riders, and there were only nine courses.

But all of that didn't really matter. What *Snowboard Kids* had was an indefinable, almost magical spark of personality.

The characters were a bunch of cartoon 10-year-olds, except for one who was 11 and wore a bikini top. After the halfway mark, when the game's designers must have got tired of drawing snowy mountains, your pre-teen snowboard genius would be sliding over green meadows, sandy deserts, wooden bridges, water, and cherry blossom-strewn Japanese lanes.

At the bottom of each course, you'd have to jostle for position in the lift queue, turning your rivals into snowmen so you could push in and steal their seat. The graphics weren't clear enough to see if your character was waving a couple of fingers as he or she was carted back to the top for another 'lap', but that's what we always imagined was happening.

Snowboard Kids was proud to be different and we loved it. Which is why it's such a shame to see how



TAP-DANCE FINGER FUN

Any idea what this is? Reckon you can decipher it in less than a tenth of a second, while evaluating the track ahead to see if you have room to land a trick that takes ages to perform? Atlus! What were you thinking about?



EVASIVE ACTION

When you see the little ! marker, it means you're about to take a twatting. However, if you're quick-witted enough, you'll be able to pull off a speedy spin trick and absorb the projectile in your special pink ring of love. This is for advanced racers only.

△ The anime speed lines are very nicely done.

△ Shoot snowballs at the boss. If there was ever a level that needed a 'must try harder' stamp plastered onto it, this is it.

△ Attack of the giant rectangular London buses. Seen it before.

shy it has become in this rather belated DS sequel.

Sadly, few people remember the original *Snowboard Kids*, but everyone knows *SSX*, so that's the direction the new *SBK* (as it's pointlessly subtitled) has taken.

Those stylishly drawn cartoon children with noses as long as their bodies? They've now grown up into surly teens, complete with generic 'angry' faces and semi-realistic proportions.

Grassy hills and fields of yellow flowers? Ousted in favour of snow, snow, concrete and snow. One of the last concessions to quirkiness is the London level, which sees you surfing down the Houses of Parliament and between boxy red buses. *Snowboard Kids* was never really about 'extreme' sport (with or without the capital X) but now it seems like whoever made the bizarre decision to resurrect this wonderful but obscure series was just a little embarrassed by it. And without the charm factor, *SBK* will never be as fondly remembered as either of its predecessors.

Anyway, whipping off the rose-tinted ski goggles and concentrating on the game in hand, what was once '*Mario Kart* on snow' is now '*SSX* with weapons' – which isn't actually a bad thing.

You've got a very small selection of wide, steep courses, which you hurtle down at the kind of speed that would have made the original game soil its pants in fear.

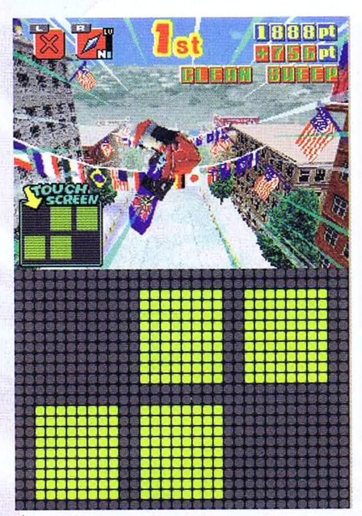
Each character has a special homing

TURBO START

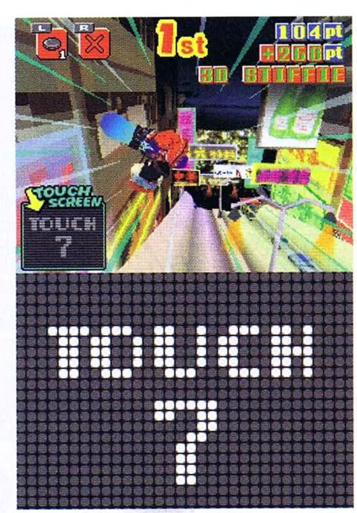
We're mentioning this because we haven't found one at all. There must be a turbo start in there somewhere, and if anyone figures it out, could you please let us know? We keep getting left behind by the computer racers, and we're supposed to be professionals…

"WHAT WAS ONCE 'MARIO KART ON SNOW' IS NOW 'SSX WITH WEAPONS'…"

"The actual races are great"



△ The bottom screen shows a linear 'map' or the special tricks commands.



△ You have to tap the screen seven times to initiate the trick. No thanks.



△ Thanks to our mighty speed boost, this snowball is going so far up that robot's exhaust pipe, it'll be melting all over its filthy CPU. Have it!

FUN WITH WEAPONS

The old system of buying power-ups from 'shop' boxes on the course has been ousted in favour of signature weapons for each character and freely available item boxes, which the CPU ignores.

■ **ICE TO SEE YOU**
It's a giant block of ice. It gets in your way. You go splat.

■ **OLD SPARKY**
This electrical ball of zap is Slash's signature weapon. Annoying.



■ **SLEEPY CHICKENS**
To escape from this one, you need to shout into the microphone.

■ **SAME OLD PLAIN OLD**
Just a minor speed boost. Exciting? No.



■ **CHUTE TO THRILL**
Slows you down bad. This one got us while we were airborne. Ta.



■ **GAYMECUBE**
Make sure you pick Nancy, otherwise this could be you…

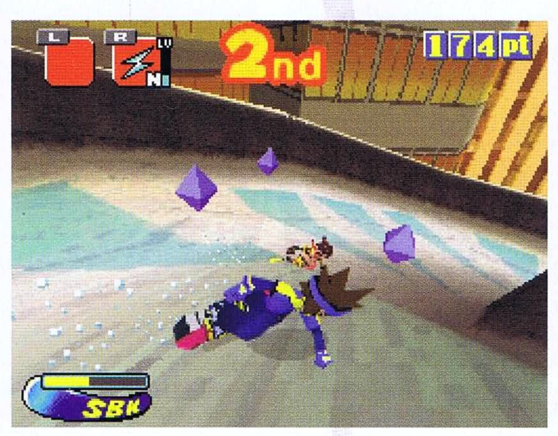
weapon, which must be charged up by performing tricks. This thing never misses, homing in from half a course away as surely as a *Mario Kart* blue shell, although you can deflect it by doing a trick at the moment of impact. Secondary weapons are contained in boxes dotted around the slopes, and you'll have free access to them in a solo game – the computer racers just pass straight through, since they're awarded as many free weapons as it takes to stop you reaching the finish line.

As well as the standard racing events, some slalom and boss levels are also thrown in from time to time. Slalom involves collecting gems and weaving through checkpoint hoops, and is generally a pretty decent sort of challenge. It's certainly the quickest way to earn loads of cash, too.

"THE BOSS LEVELS INVOLVE SHOOTING SNOWBALLS AT A LARGE, ROBOTIC TURKEY"

Unfortunately the boss levels, which involve shooting snowballs

SUCK SORES
Minor annoyances, boldly highlighted…



Collect these gems and you can spend them in the confusing shop. We bought an 'Exhibition' course, which promptly vanished. Crap.



Trick time indeed. A one-touch trick is easy enough to initiate, but the animation still takes ages to complete. Kerrrr-asssshhhh!



Well done! We did it! Hopefully Tommy will be more than halfway through his trick animation by the time his corpse comes to rest.



"WAKE UP, YOU GOOD-FOR-NOTHING TOERAG! There's a wall coming!"



at a large, robotic turkey, are severely rubbish. Before you can fire a snowball, you have to perform several puny tricks of the type that can be safely done on a flat surface. There's no racing involved, only sliding down a hill, hopping left-right-left-right until you've charged up your snowball to fire at the boss. Do this four times before either of you reaches the bottom and you win. Fun, or just an annoying, frustrating distraction between races?

Anyway, the actual races are great, which is why it's such a pity that it's let down by some half-hearted design. There's no option to race a single course, except in Slalom mode – if you want opposition on your favourite course, you have to keep playing the World Tour mode until it crops up. The menus are atrocious, with options nested within options, making it hard to tell where you are. High scores? Nope. Time trials? Not in this game.

Yet, for some reason, the *SBK* cart has been residing in our DS for the past week or so. Perhaps those kids haven't completely lost all of their old charm after all.

MARTIN KITTS



TRAIN IN VAIN
Honestly, the game's Training mode sucks the fat one. It's just a handful of video clips with a summary of the text from the instruction booklet. They should have had it presented by a giant yellow penguin or something. A missed opportunity.



- Nice and fast.
- Single-cart multiplayer.
- Tight D-Pad controls.



- Samey courses.
- Stupid touch-screen controls.
- Quirkless.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Mario Kart DS
Nintendo
NGC/114 5/5
Superior karting with loads of multiplayer features and online racing.



7 VISUALS
Fast and technically good, if a little lacking in personality.

3 SOUNDS
Sorry, but whoever voiced Slash needs to be shot in the larynx.

7 MASTERY
They've managed to get the turning controls just right.

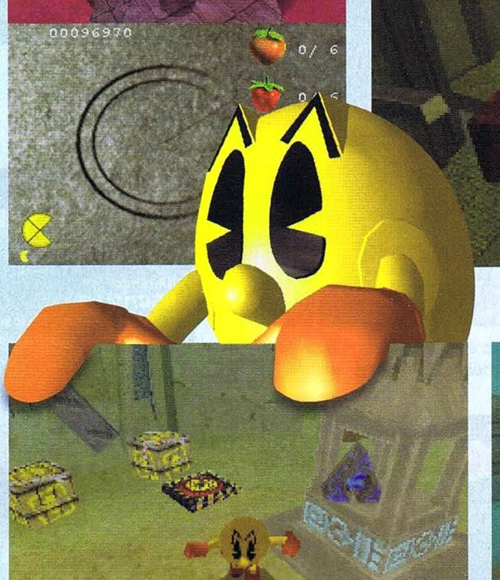
8 LIFESPAN
Multiplayer is fun, and it'll take a while to unlock the boards.

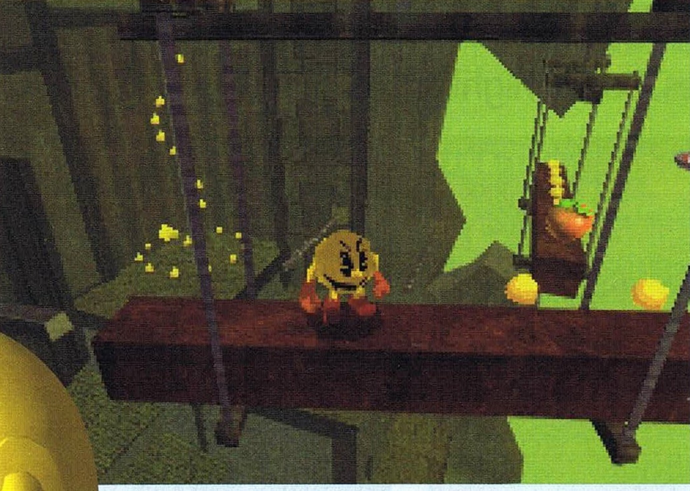


VERDICT
Decent enough, so long as you don't expect anything as good as the original (like we did). Give it a chance.

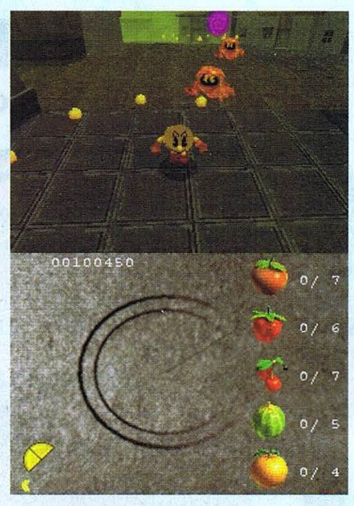


NGC 75



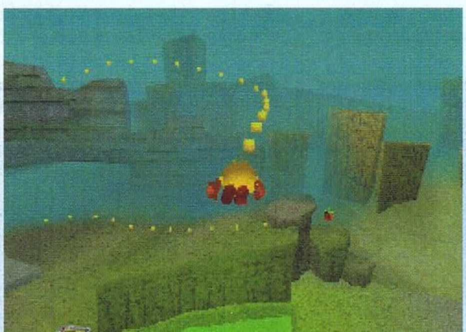


△ He's fat, he's round, he's always on the ground. Except when falling through a space after the camera's ruined a jump, natch.

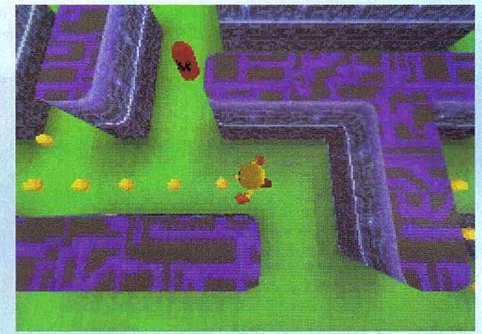


△ Look at the image on the bottom screen – that's real care and attention.

△ The extent of the 'puzzles' in *Pac Man World 3*: find this key, slot into door, roll eyes, switch off, feel better.



△ Activating a switch causes The Man to float along paths of mid-air Pac-dots. We like the sound, at least.



△ One bonus game for your money: a version of the original *Pac Man*, with a 3D view on the top screen.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NAMCO
DEVELOPER	HUMAN SOFT
RELEASE DATE	MARCH 17
PLAYERS	1
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	NO
WI-FI	NO
MIC	NO
COST	£30

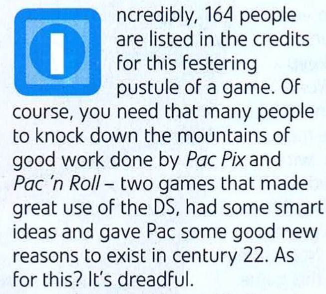


PAC MAN WORLD 3

Pac's back – and it's enough to give you indigestion.

Incredibly, 164 people are listed in the credits for this festering pustule of a game. Of course, you need that many people to knock down the mountains of good work done by *Pac Pix* and *Pac 'n Roll* – two games that made great use of the DS, had some smart ideas and gave Pac some good new reasons to exist in century 22. As for this? It's dreadful.

Pac eats dots and fruit, and he does it with the 1980-era 'wakka wakka gulp' sound effects that we like. Everything else is unacceptably poor, slapped together with as much care, attention and talent as your average supermarket employee puts into telling you where the beans are.



Invisible walls hurt you if you walk into them. Scenery disappears before your very eyes. The camera flies around like a mosquito that's stuck its suck-tubes into a can of Red Bull, happily settling inside walls or even Pac Man himself. Pac's face isn't animated – he dies by falling on his back with his fat smile still fixed on his face.

> **"IT'S REALLY HARD TO FIND THE WORDS FOR A GAME WITH SUCH A NAUSEOUS STENCH"**

That's just the start. There's no challenge here: the levels might be 3D – drab underground caves and factories without a sliver of sunny daylight in sight – but they're basically straight paths. You search for crystals or keys that unlock new routes, you punch robots and insects (insects!), and – our least favourite bit – you eat ghosts in

THAT'S THE SPIRIT

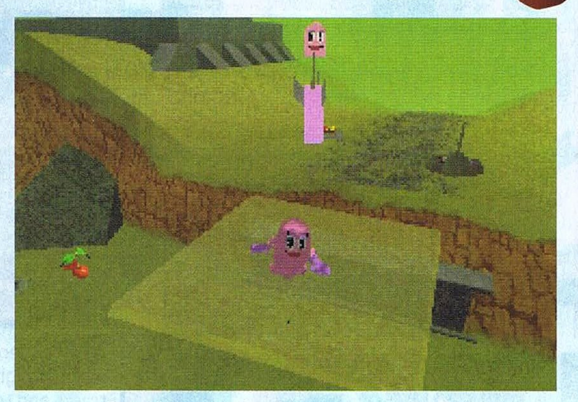
Pac Man now counts floating bedsheets among his friends…



Pac Man World 3's double-screen intro 'cutscene' makes absolutely no sense whatsoever. So it's not clear why…



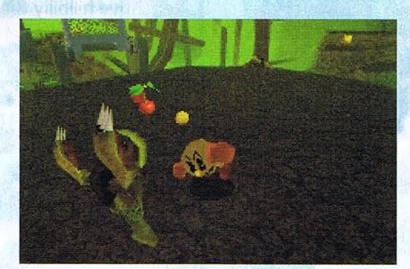
…Pinky and Clyde are now in league with the man who usually invites them for lunch. They're brought into play at scary-looking ghost spots.



Pinky transforms 'ghost' platforms into solid objects for Pac to hop onto; Clyde knocks down pillars to create bridges. It's shoddy stuff.



The almost unbelievable animation is a real laugh a minute. Clyde's chunky blue doughnuts of doom have to be seen to be believed…



△ Great to see Pac Man back and punching gargoyles, just like in the old days. Er…



△ We've had more fun at funerals than we've had playing *Pac Man World 3*.



△ Dragging keys into locks is the most inept use of the DS we've seen – official!

the occasional 3D interpretation of a traditional Pac maze. We actually got quite excited when we had to hop across a series of platforms in level five – that's how little we'd actually had to do until then.

As for DS usage, there isn't any. Oh, sure, dragging a key icon into a lock icon does use the DS, but not in a real sense. And rolling Pac by tapping the touch screen while pressing Y? There must be special awards they give for this kind of shoddy coding.

Pac Man World 3 is short, too, and it knows it. A nice little trick the game pulls on the fourth level is only giving you one life, simply so you're less likely to reach the end. Clever. Throw in a camera that's happy to get stuck showing you a top-down view of the three square feet of floor beneath you, the need to drop onto platforms you can't even see and the almost total lack of advice you're given about what the hell you're supposed to actually do and *Pac Man World 3* lasts four times as long as it should do.

At its worst, the game just seems stupid. We spent hours trying to work out why dropping onto a particular innocent-looking platform in Gogekka Central killed us instantly. Then we realised that this was the game's special way of telling us that we needed to backtrack, ride down a half-hidden lift and bash the four nails that would, for some reason, cause the platform to rise up and therefore make it non-deadly. You're expected to pay £30 for this pathetic, uninspired shambles of a cart, remember.

It's really hard to find the words for a game with such a nauseous stench about it. Even the 3D version of the original *Pac Man* that's included as a bonus isn't up to much. However, even in this stupid, scrolling, one-maze-and-you're-done form, the original 1980 game still has the right to point and laugh at the ugly mess of rushed, amateurish work it's attached to.

Basically, we don't like it.

MARK GREEN



CUT IT OUT

Pac Man World 3's box proudly boasts of its bonus interview with Pac Man daddy Toru Iwatani. But wait! It's just the video interview from the grown-up console version, split into a handful of repeating static images. What's the point?



- "Wakka wakka wakka wakka"
- The original *Pac Man*'s still got it



- Appalling camera.
- Laughable animation.
- Far too short.



IF YOU LIKE THIS…

Super Mario 64
Nintendo
NGC/91 91%
Essentially ten years older but ten hundred times better than this awful game.



2 VISUALS

Murky, foggy worlds and inept animation made us feel ill..



5 SOUNDS

Cute tunes and retro effects: the sound man earned his keep.



3 MASTERY

Awful camera, poor puzzles and a very frustrating experience.

2 LIFESPAN

We endured this long enough to tell you that it doesn't get better.

VERDICT

A cynical attempt to use the Pac Man name to shift something even a toilet would turn its nose up at.



NGC 27

"Making money from rednecks gives us a warm feeling"



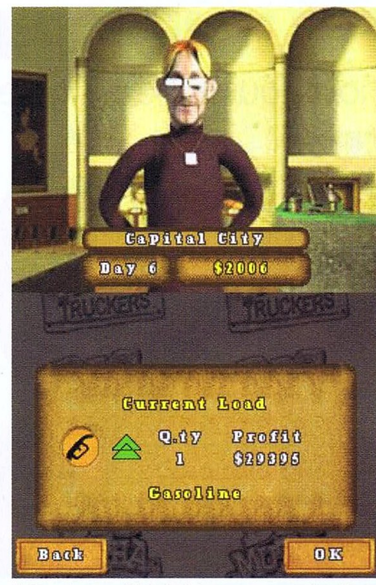
△ Double dang damage! Dawg-nabbit!



△ Honk and watch them slide away.



△ You don't get a single pixel of leeway (or a reversing camera) in this parking challenge.



△ Buy low, sell high. It's very, very simple.



△ Time for a rather fiddly bonus mission.

BIG MUTHA TRUCKERS

Ten-four, good buddy. We got us a convoy…



INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	ZOO DIGITAL
DEVELOPER	RAYLIGHT
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-2
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	NO
WI-FI	NO
MIC	NO
COST	£30



If this trucking-and-trading game was set in Britain, you'd spend the majority of it sitting in a white Transit van, stuck somewhere on the M25. Your cargo would consist of a load of knocked-off Robbie Williams calendars from 2004, and your destination would be a Sunday market at a school car park in Luton.

So thank heavens the developers chose the slightly more glamorous location of the American midwest, where you're free to run your road-train along eight-lane highways, through epic countryside.

Or at least you would be if you were playing the Gamecube version. Squeezed into a DS cartridge, it's a lot smaller and less interesting. The roads are quite narrow and you can just carve through traffic by using your magic horn – one toot and everything (except cop cars and bikers) pulls aside to let you pass.

There's no subtlety to the handling. You're driving an 18-wheel beast, but stick it in reverse (where you'll be driving blind, thanks to the lack of a rear camera) and you can slide sideways in an uncontrollable, unrealistic way.

"THERE'S NO REAL SUBTLETY TO THE HANDLING – YOU'RE DRIVING AN 18-WHEEL BEAST"

Technical dodginess aside, *Big Mutha Truckers* on DS demonstrates what a good, solid concept the Gamecube original was. Driving trucks is cool, even if they handle like Bowser's *Mario Kart* vehicle on ice, and making money from rednecks gives us a warm feeling inside.

It's almost impossible to lose cash on a deal. You fill your rig with the cheapest goods at one of five cities, then transport it to another one for an easy profit. What you don't spend on fuel you use to repair your truck after smashing it up in one of the irritating (but oddly compelling) bonus missions.

And that's your lot. It's stripped down to the bare bones, but it's still likeable, despite its roughness.

MARTIN KITTS



- Fairly nice graphics.
- Uncomplicated trading gameplay.
- Bonus missions.



- Hopeless handling.
- Dumb AI.
- Compared to the GC version, it's rough.



IF YOU LIKE THIS…

Big Mutha Truckers
Empire
NGC/83 71%
In hindsight, and compared to the DS version, it's actually quite impressive. Really.





7 VISUALS
A pretty decent 3D maze of highways, dirt tracks and towns.



6 SOUNDS
Repetitive hillbilly tunes and a tiny number of radio announcements.



5 MASTERY
Nice graphics but the handling just isn't what we'd hoped for.

7 LIFESPAN
Trading is quite satisfying. You may well want to finish it.

VERDICT

Not awful, even though it's a weak imitation of the Gamecube version. Try before you buy, mutha truckers.



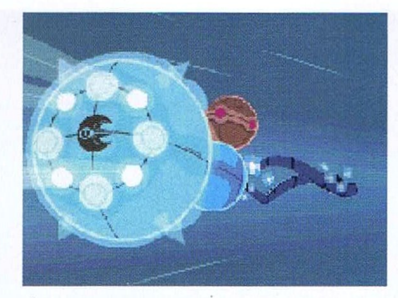
70





△ You can manually extend your combos.





△ There is some kind of story in the game.





△ The opening puzzles teach you the basics.





- Great combo-based puzzler.
- Nice music.
- Well presented.



- It's not as good as *Meteos*.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Meteos
Nintendo
NGC/108 5/5
Undoubtedly the best puzzler on the system, and a fantastic game in its own right.





6 VISUALS

It's a puzzler, so it's not exactly going to look spectacular.

8 SOUNDS

There's a surprisingly good mix of toe-tapping tuneage on offer.

7 MASTERY

Another block puzzler, sure, but it adds something different.

8 LIFESPAN

Story mode gets rock hard. There are plenty of other modes too.

VERDICT

It's not the best puzzler available on DS, but it's still unique and addictive enough to make it well worth a pop.



NGC 81

POKÉMON TROZEI

Get your head around this surprisingly good Pokémon-themed block pusher...

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	GENIUS SONORITY
OUT	NOW (JAP)
PLAYERS	1-2
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	YES
WI-FI	NO
MIC	NO
COST	5,800 YEN (£28)



A far cry from the *Zoo Keeper* carbon copy that we were expecting, *Pokémon Torouze* shows that there's still some life in the humble old block puzzler. Once again, matching is the name of the game – in this case, it's Pokémon heads – but the way it works is different from what you might expect.

Rather than shifting blocks one by one, rotating them or swapping them, *Pokémon Torouze* requires you to slide entire rows around the trough, left to right, top to bottom. Once a row is pushed off the far right, it cycles through from the left, and the same applies to vertical slides. Once you've shifted the rows in such a way that you've aligned four or five Pokémon heads horizontally or vertically, they disappear. There's nothing too clever in that, of course. It's what happens afterwards that makes things so compelling.

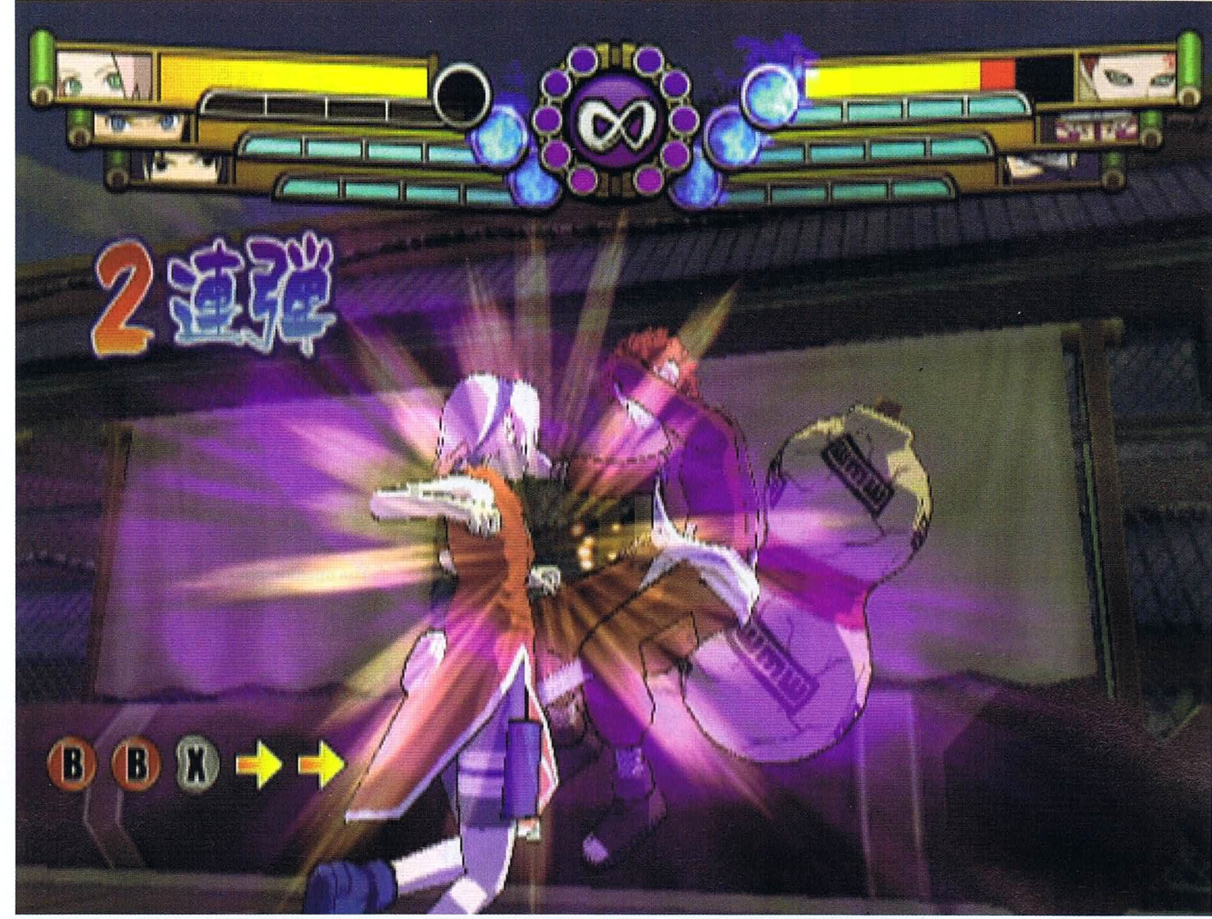
Once you've nailed your row of four, you have a brief period of time in which to follow it up with a row of three or more. Fail and you have to create another four. Succeed and it's the puzzling equivalent of party time – for as long as you continue to match Pokémon heads in twos, threes or fours, you can keep your combo going. Once you miss a match-up in this window, you have to go back to finding a match of four again. And so it continues.

> **THERE'S STILL LIFE IN THE HUMBLE OLD BLOCK PUZZLER**

Just like *Zoo Keeper*, it's horribly infectious, but unlike *Zoo Keeper*, there's a definite level of depth here. There's far more to consider and it's not just about spotting scoring opportunities – it's as much about setting up scores in advance and then using your reflexes and quick thinking to drive your combos through the roof.

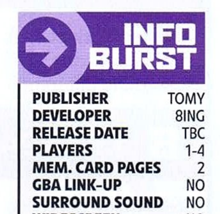
There's a kind of freedom here that *Zoo Keeper* simply can't offer. No, *Pokémon Torouze* isn't as simple, and maybe, as a result, it's not quite as addictive. However, it certainly feels like a much more rounded game, putting it just behind *Polarium* and *Meteos* as the best puzzlers that you can get on your handheld.

GERAINT EVANS



△ Ah, the old Practice mode. This is great for mastering the longer combos, and getting the hang of these is essential for success.

NARUTO GEKITOU NINJA TAISEN 4



INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	TOMY
DEVELOPER	8ING
RELEASE DATE	TBC
PLAYERS	1-4
MEM. CARD PAGES	2
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	7,650 YEN (£37)





△ The dodge and counter mechanics are the key to victory.



△ There's a strong cast of characters and a great four-player mode.

An anime-fuelled fighter with something just a little bit different to offer…

Our initial impressions of this battler are pretty fair. It looks nice enough, with simple cel-shaded character models set against some attractive and diverse backgrounds, and the control mechanics, while feeling a little 'old', are easy to grasp.

The fundamentals of the game are simple. You can choose three characters. Fights take place on a 2D plane, and you can dodge in and out of the screen by tapping either shoulder button. The A and B buttons deliver attacks (although not necessarily punch and kick as you might expect) and combinations of the two, while flicks of the analogue deliver longer strings of attacks. The Y button executes throws, the X button activates a super, and the Z button swaps your three characters in and out of battle in a tag-team style.

Pretty easy then, which obviously makes things pretty accessible. Unfortunately, you begin to think that that's all there is to it. It feels painfully average, a little too simplistic, and naturally you start to wonder how the hell it's going to sustain your interest. But stick with it and you'll soon learn not to treat it as just another standard fighting game – it's more innovative than it seems at first.

Finding the game's hidden depths isn't easy. Swapping characters in and out of battle and activating supers can feel a touch confusing initially. Confusing in

NARUTO GEKITOU NINJA TAISEN 4

A surprisingly tactical clobber-'em-up



△ The character models are simple but nicely done.



△ Naruto. Lots of him.



△ Gamecube isn't really blessed with fighters.



△ It isn't true 3D, but the lovely specials make up for it.

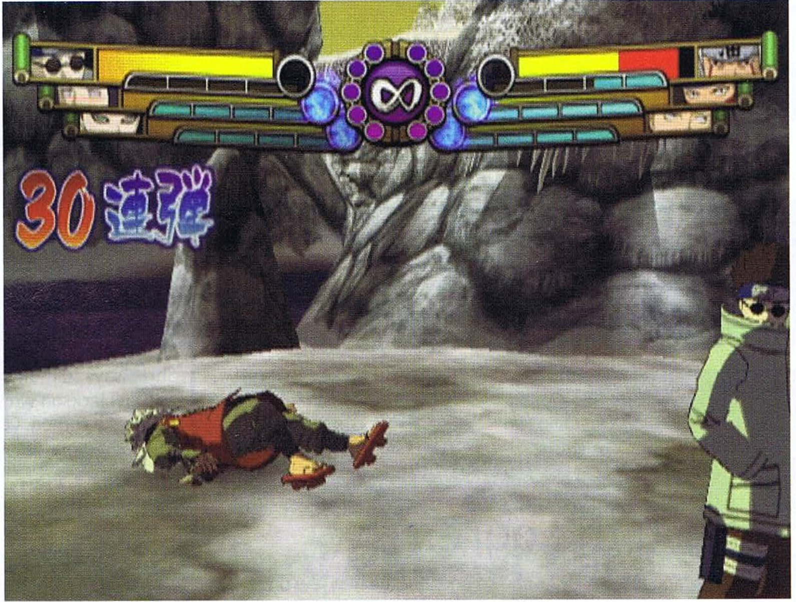
SUPER STAR

The supers are the main draw here, both for their strategic importance and the fact that they're simply lovely to watch. With so many different combinations available to each of the characters, they don't get too tiresome either…









△ There's nothing like making someone you love suffer a humiliating 30-hit combo. Result.





that you don't have the faintest idea what's going on. When you start, you'll hit a level of difficulty in where you get your face pounded into the ground without any idea as to how or why, the CPU dishing out unholy amounts of damage in a blaze of blurred, cel-shaded neon madness. Once you get your eye in, though, you begin to work it out.

It all comes down to character swapping and super-move activation. Characters can be brought in and out of battle mid-combo, for example. You can start a combo with one, and half way through, bring in another character to do their bit. This is the first key to understanding the game. Second is the cueing system. Characters in a battle build up their super meter for damage done and taken, while characters out of battle build up their meter in the background. You can bring out individuals and use their super alone, you can wait till all three are charged and lay down a ludicrous amount of damage in one go, or you can stagger them into a long chain of supers. Mastering how, when and why you use a character or activate their super is where the game gets its longevity, and various combinations of characters work well for different strategies.

At this point, *Naruto* really blossoms as a fighting game, and when you take into account the counters and dodges, you have a balanced, tactical battler with some really outrageous supers that can fail thanks to a well-timed dodge, while victory can be snatched by some cunning character swapping. It may take a while to grasp, and it certainly takes practice to master, but underneath it all there's a very solid and enjoyable fighting game.

GERAINT EVANS

FOUR PLAY

There's a fair amount of value to the Multiplayer mode, with plenty of permutations available. You can have four-player all-against-all bouts, two players against two computer opponents, standard one-on-one bouts – whatever you fancy. Best of all, the strategies needed for success vary with each mode.

> **"A VERY BALANCED, TACTICAL BATTLER WITH SOME REALLY OUTRAGEOUS SUPER MOVES"**



- Visually striking.
- Very innovative battle system.
- Great multiplayer.



- Takes practice to really understand.
- Needs like-skilled friends to get the most from it.



IF YOU LIKE THIS…

Soul Calibur 2
Nintendo
NGC/85 92%
Undoubtedly the best fighter on Gamecube. It's got Link in it too, which is, you know, nice.



7 VISUALS

Not mind blowing, but the cel-shaded characters are nice.



6 SOUNDS

Heavy on Japanese speech with pretty forgettable tunes.

8 MASTERY

Seems simple enough but it has sufficient depth for purists.

8 LIFESPAN

There are plenty of multiplayer modes to get to grips with.

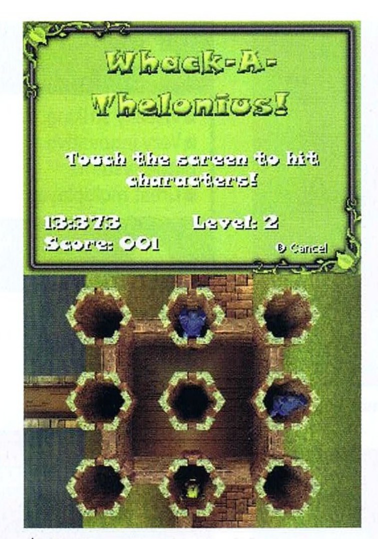
VERDICT

A unique-looking fighter with an interesting, super-heavy approach to battling. Very different, but hugely enjoyable.



NGC 83

"Kicking the crap out of each other"

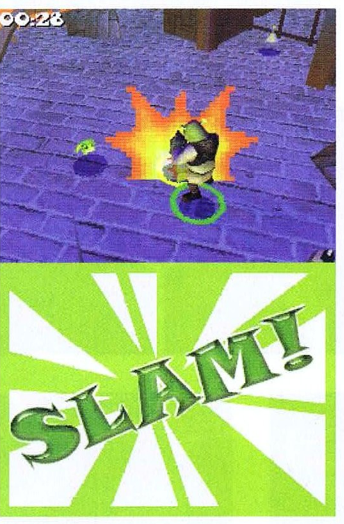


△ Tap the screen to whack them.



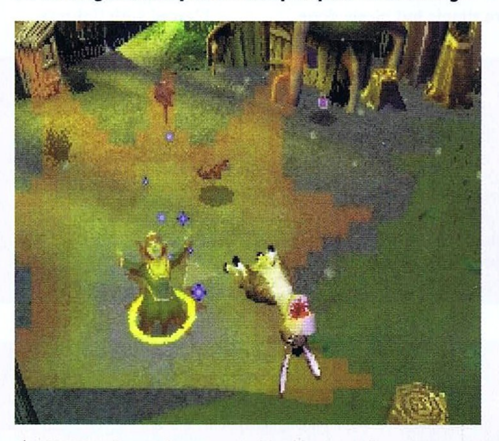


△ Just hit Y repeatedly to win the fights.





△ Turning an enemy into a sheep is quite entertaining.



△ Mrs Shrek uses her ample chest to her advantage.



- It looks decent.
- You can turn your opponents into sheep.



- Very basic combos.
- Story mode is far too easy.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Street Fighter Alpha 3
NGC/75 91%
There isn't a decent DS fighter available in the UK yet, so go for this instead, the best beat-'em-up on GBA.



8 VISUALS

The characters look nice and chunky, while the arenas are solid.

5 SOUNDS

Shrek says "C'mon" like Michael Jackson when he does a combo. Grr!



5 MASTERY

Apart from some Mega Challenges, there's token use of the stylus.



6 LIFESPAN

Unbelievably short Story mode, but some extra challenges.

VERDICT

This basic brawler lacks the charm of the GC version. We're still waiting for a good DS fighter in the UK.



SHREK SUPERSLAM

More basic brawling from the ogre.



INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER	AMAZE
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-4
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	YES
WI-FI	NO
MIC	NO
COST	£35



When you think about it, a Shrek beat-'em-up is a funny idea. Aren't donkey and Shrek supposed to be best pals? Then why the hell are they kicking the crap out of each other? You can understand Shrek taking on Lord Farquad, but not donkey, and certainly not Mrs Shrek!

Anyway, for those who missed last month's Gamecube review (we forgive you for not stopping in your tracks when you saw the words *Shrek Superslam* on the page), this is a four-player brawler in the mould of the Dreamcast classic *Powerstone*. Set in 3D arenas with different levels, you can pick up pots and chuck them, stab opponents with forks and swords that are lying about, and drop some bombs.

Unlike the Gamecube version, you don't have to use these items as soon as you pick them up – they go into your Item box and are selectable with the DS stylus. Bit of a token gesture, that one.

It's a good job that there are items lying around because the fighting is unbelievably basic. There are hardly any good combos, but you don't need them as you can defeat any computer opponent by tapping Y repeatedly to do a three-hitter. We repeatedly did this in Story mode and completed the whole thing in 17 minutes.

If that sounds a bit short, you can get some extra lifespan from the Mega Challenge mode, where you have to complete loads of mini-games. On Gamecube, these were just fighting challenges – you had to be the first player to get a superslam, defeat all the knights and so on – but the first few on DS are a bit different. There's an annoying memory test where you have to match up character tiles, a *Space Invaders*-style game with gingerbread men and soldiers, and then there's a whack-a-mole thing where you tap the screen with your stylus. It's like a drawn-out version of *Wario Ware*'s mini-games, only with Shrek characters – which isn't a terrible thing. After this short burst of enjoyment, though, the rest of the challenges focuses on the fighting. Shame.

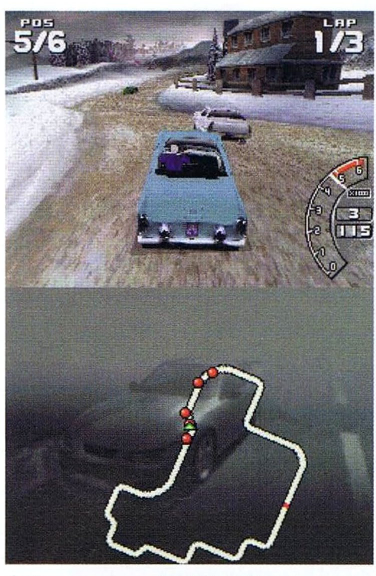
> "THEY SHOULD STOP MAKING SHREK FIGHT HIS FRIENDS..."

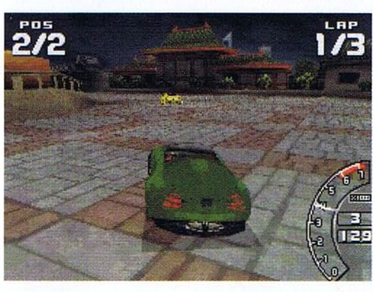
It makes us think that Activision should stop making Shrek fight his friends and create a whole game in the style of the first few Mega Challenges. *Shrek Party*, maybe. On the other hand…

TOM EAST

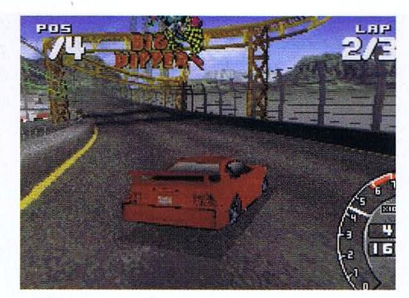
A racer that never gets into top gear



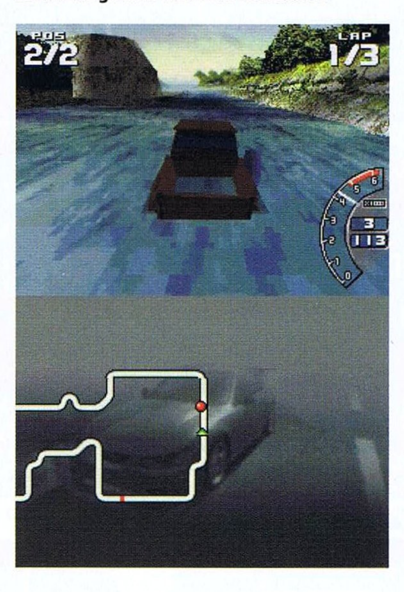




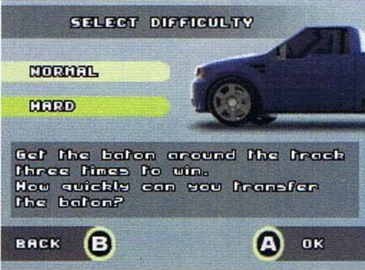
△ Six-car races on DS? We doff our caps.



△ The fairground track is a real looker.







△ Nice to see the helmet's on. Be safe, kids!





- Fast cars feel fast.
- Pretty tracks with good shortcuts.
- Classic cars are funny.



- Pickup truck racing? Hmm.
- Race ideas like 'relay' are rubbish.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Ridge Racer DS
Namco
NGC/108 3/5
Even though it handles like a pig, it's hard not to love *Ridge* racing.



7 VISUALS

Decent 3D – the jungle track left our eyes feeling all happy inside.

4 SOUNDS

The music isn't bad, but the engine noise definitely is.

7 MASTERY

Touch-screen steering works pretty well. And, as usual, there's a map.

7 LIFESPAN

Plenty to do, but you'll snap your DS in two during 'relay' races.

VERDICT

It's not too bad as far as DS racers go, but poor workmanship means it soon starts spluttering like a Model T.



NGC 63

FORD RACING 3

Ford's Model T and SVT finally come together in this handheld racer.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	ZOO DIGITAL
DEVELOPER	VISUAL IMPACT
RELEASE DATE	NOW
PLAYERS	1-4
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	NO
WI-FI	NO
MIC	NO
COST	£30





How about this – a car 'relay race' where at the end of every lap, you have to slow down to 50mph and 'pass the baton' to another vehicle. While you're doing this, your rival – who doesn't have to bother with any of this relay nonsense – recaptures all the ground you'd gained and roars back into first place.

As you can imagine, this is an incredibly annoying feature. Unfortunately, though, it's not the only one to be found in this game. There are also the boost starts that unavoidably slam you straight into the back bumper of the other cars on the starting grid. Even worse, the on-screen info is stamped all over the screen so you can't see where you're going. And anyway, who buys a racing game to steer Ford pickup trucks around an industrial estate? Not us, that's for sure.

The thing is, there's actually some great racing at the heart of *Ford Racing 3*. Stick to the meatier cars like the SVTs and it feels pretty nippy. The tracks aren't afraid of long straights, circuits that are more shortcut than track, or even mental *Burnout*-style corners that tumble off cliffs at 90 degrees.

Perhaps best of all, this is a racing game where the DS-controlled opponents occasionally come off worse from collisions. At last! Of course, that's probably why they have to catch up by cheating like a lion with a shotgun.

Still, the game's let down by some annoying niggles and half-hearted design. You'll roll your eyes like a kid's doll when you drive through a pool and see flat blue polygons of water slice through your car undisturbed. Oh, and the manual doesn't even know which of the DS's two displays is the touch screen. Very classy.

MARK GREEN

> **"THE GAME IS LET DOWN BY SOME ANNOYING NIGGLES AND HALF-HEARTED DESIGN"**



△ No language barriers here, as Eggsecute is talking the international language of money.



△ This is about as 'special' as the special effects get. Such is the Pokémon way.



△ We've always been taught that only trainers can turn Pokémon bad. No longer – Gengar's a git of his own accord.

POKÉMON FUSHIGI NO DUNGEON



PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	CHUNSOFT
RELEASE DATE	NOW (JAP) TBA (US/UK)
PLAYERS	1
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	NO
WI-FI	NO
MIC	NO
COST	4,800¥ (£23)







△ Your poor fighting 'mon always needs a lie down after a dungeon trek. Killing is exhausting.

They talk! They shop! They even use a cat-owned bank! Pokétrainers are out of a job.

How many *Pokémon* games has Nintendo released? You'd probably say a few hundred thousand. In fact, it's six. That's if you don't count all the sequels, the remixes and the non-*Pokémon* titles that have been subsumed by The Brand. And one of those six is the mighty *Pokémon Channel*, remember.

So here's Number 31 in the series, and it offers something quite different to its numerous predecessors. *Pokémon: Fushigi no Dungeon* ('*Mysterious Dungeon*', if you've lost your Japanese dictionary) is not just a rebadged version of a game that's been big in Japan for longer than fish fillets; it's also the first *Pokémon* game to bin everything that's made those 386 claw-happy money-monsters what they are.

Pokémon now chat away in English, live in villages, earn money, go shopping, and bitch and fight among themselves. It's bizarre: the core of the game – the *Mysterious Dungeon* part, the bit that's just about wandering around dungeon mazes and fighting – actually suits *Pokémon* quite well. However, the theme's been twisted out of shape to fit an RPG overworld the game really doesn't need. A bank for Pokémon run by a cat? Come on.

Aside from the missing Trainers, *Pokémon: Fushigi no Dungeon* isn't wildly dissimilar to the familiar *Pokémon* scrapping – when an angry Electrode or Baltoy bounces

POKÉMON WORLD

Running around in the tall grass is for plebs…



Even the fightiest Pokémon needs to have a little lie down after killing off 30 or so of his species. Your base is the perfect place for a bit of a kip and a save.



'Friends areas' are where the Pokémon you've saved from a dungeony fate will hang around, waiting to join your team for the next trek underground.



You can combine moves together at Gulpin's shop. This is essential because some Pokémon can kill you in one turn if you don't kick their heads off first.




Alternatively, if you prefer saving your Pokémon dollars (sigh), Persian will see you right by looking after your cash. It's, er, what Pokémon is all about.




△ Use of DS? The fact that this game co-exists on GBA is a clue…



△ There's a gym that'll generate practice dungeons until you're dead.



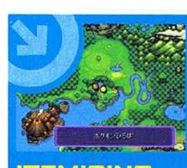
△ One fainted team 'mon and it's right back to the start for you. Ace!



△ Some of the dungeon maps manage to fill the entire DS screen.

your way, it's basically turn-based HP hammering with four moves for each monster as usual. The major differences are that it's all 'live', rather than menu-based; there's more of a focus on team 'formations'; and it's very, very dull.

The fact that the dungeons are randomly generated by your DS is what does it for us. *Fushigi no Dungeon* has only 20 multi-floor caves, and just rejigging the corridors and room sizes doesn't make them seem fresh and exciting. Pocketing Pocket Monsters is usually fun because of the randomness of what you find, not what you see: here you'll bash up against hundreds of dead ends and get sent back home by big gangs of 'mon, just because it's (mildly) different every time.



ITEMISING

Many familiar items are here, including our old friends the 'Technical Machines', which are sold in town by a pair of 'mon who we hope have a licence for touting performance-enhancing items. However, some items just don't fit into the Pokémon universe at all. Mudkip chucking explosive seeds around? Pff.

Still, you can tell this isn't a game developed by Nintendo. Chunsoft lets you skip around empty bits of dungeon when a Nintendo game would still be only halfway through an unskippable half-hour of introductory chat. And that's important: if there's any 1985-era fun to be had randomly exploring random dungeons for random Pokémon, it only works because you can play it fast and with a minimum of messing about. The familiar TMs, moves and evolutions are there, and *Fushigi no Dungeon* becomes like a fitter, faster version of *Pokémon*. With a plot for Japanese speakers only…

Generally, though, this is boring, half-hearted gaming that makes very little use of the DS. The fact that there's a bug that will happily wipe the save game off any Game Boy Advance game you own sums the whole thing up nicely. We've said it before and we'll say it again: roll on *Diamond* and *Pearl*.

> **"POKÉMON NOW CHAT AWAY IN ENGLISH, LIVE IN VILLAGES, GO SHOPPING AND BITCH…"**

MARK GREEN



- A newish way of collecting 'em all.
- Perfect for stop-start DS play.



- Overly simple and far too repetitive.
- Pokémon's special brand of 2D ugliness.



IF YOU LIKE THIS…

Mario & Luigi: Partners in Time
Nintendo
NGC/116 90%
Funny, fun-filled adventure for the whole Mario family.



5 VISUALS

Pokémon never really changes its looks, but this is duller than ever.

5 SOUNDS

Pokémon might be able to talk now, but they're pretty quiet.



4 MASTERY

Even Nintendo can't be bothered with the stylus these days.



5 LIFESPAN

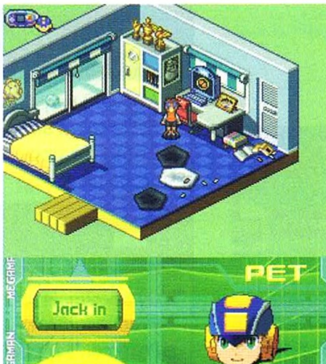
Got the patience to collect 386 Pokémon? Good luck with that!

VERDICT

Some substandard subterranean battling. Random, but if you've seen one dungeon, you've seen 'em all.



"An interesting little RPG"

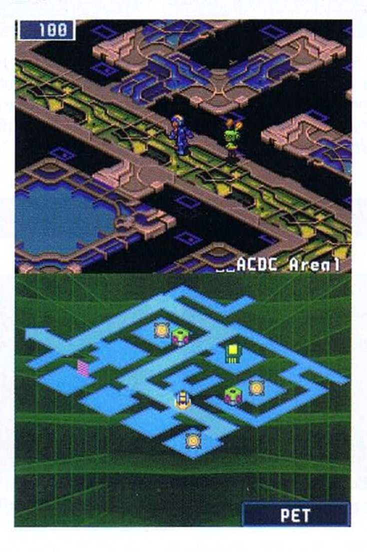



△ That's one tidy bedroom for a kid.





△ It looks the same as the GBA version.







△ You use the touch screen to organise your weapons.





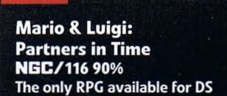
△ What could it be? We bet it's not that exciting.



- It's still pretty enjoyable to play.
- Great battle system.



- There's practically nothing new here.
- It's almost identical to the GBA game.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Mario & Luigi: Partners in Time
NGC/116 90%
The only RPG available for DS that's worth buying right now.




4 VISUALS

Basically a GBA game that's been ported to the DS. Poor.

6 SOUNDS

The same as the GBA, but with some added speech samples.

5 MASTERY

The game is sound enough, but there are few DS features.

8 LIFESPAN

It's a decent-sized adventure, and it isn't easy either.

VERDICT

We liked the GBA game, but wanted so much more from this. Very disappointing, to say the least.


NGC 58

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	CAPCOM
DEVELOPER	CAPCOM
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-8
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	NO
WI-FI	NO
MIC	NO
COST	£30




MEGA MAN BATTLE NETWORK 5: DOUBLE TEAM

Lazy GBA port of an average RPG anyone?

We must be the only people in the world who actually like these games. We wouldn't go as far as saying we loved them, of course – that'd be stupid – but we stand by our conviction that these are actually pretty solid and enjoyable little RPGs. However, we'll admit that we aren't particularly amused by the fact that this is a near-direct port of the GBA game.

Everything here is the same: the music, the game world, the character dialogue, the story… the whole lot. Needless to say, if you own the GBA game, there's absolutely no point in shelling out for this one. In fact, we can pretty much count all of the differences on one hand.

First up, you get touchable menu screens for ease of navigation. Actually, the whole chip folder editing, where you swap attack and support chips in and out of your battle deck, is a bit easier in this version. Then there are the odd (and quite irritating) speech samples for events like receiving email or jacking into the game's terminals. Finally, there's the inclusion of both versions of the GBA game on one cart, with the opportunity to battle with up to seven of your mates – but let's face it, that's always going to be a bit of a struggle…

So it's a bit of a disappointment then. After five remixes of very similar RPGs, it's all starting to get a bit on the stale side. A new DS feature-specific Network Transmission could, in theory, have shaken things up a bit, and freshened up an RPG series that we not only enjoy, but also feel is criminally overlooked. Unfortunately, wheeling out a cynical port isn't going to do the series any favours at all.

> **"IT'S WORTH A LOOK IF YOU'RE NEW TO THE WHOLE THING"**

That said, for anyone who's never touched one of these games (and we'd imagine that's probably quite a lot of you), this is still an interesting little RPG with a strong battle system, fusing deck creation, strategy and real-time action. It's worth a look if you're new to the whole thing, but stay well clear if you're a fan of the series.

GERAINT EVANS



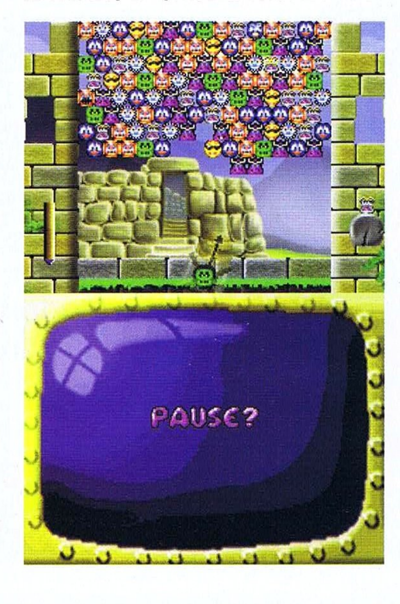


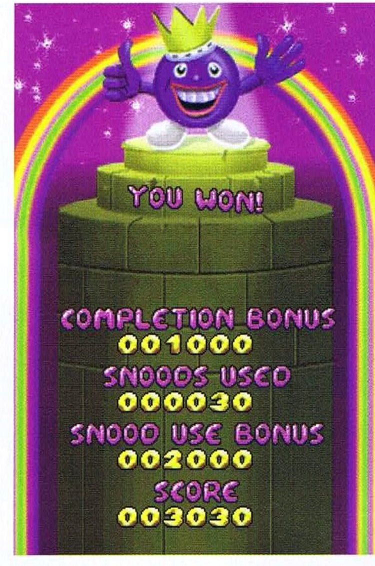


△ Ugly *and* annoying? *Snood* has it all.



△ Get ready to squint as the Snoods shrink.





△ The most punchable game character ever?





- It's all we've got until *Bust-A-Move DS.*



- It's flawed.
- It's ugly.
- It's irritating.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Meteos
Nintendo
NGC/108 5/5
Or pretty much any other puzzle game on Nintendo, as long as it's not this one.



2 VISUALS
It's only a puzzle game, of course, but there's no sense of style.

4 SOUNDS
Some of the music is okay, but the fanfare makes us spit blood.

1 MASTERY
Using the touch-screen to aim works like a car with square wheels.

5 LIFESPAN
If you're prepared to see past its faults, it's basically *Bust-A-Move*.

VERDICT
Looks and plays like a poor version of *Bust-A-Move*. Which, basically, is what it is.



SNOOD 2 ON VACATION

Whether Snood is on holiday or at home, it's making faces at us and we hate it...

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	ZOO DIGITAL
DEVELOPER	GRAVITY
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-2
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	NO
WI-FI	NO
MIC	NO
COST	£30



S*nood* is a game for people who don't know that *Bust-A-Move/Puzzle Bobble* exists. It was fine when it was an ugly, flawed shareware download for your PC, but charging £30 for it on DS, with box art seemingly knocked out in ten minutes by a seven-year-old wearing a blindfold and mittens – that's just rude.

Matching up coloured bubbles is really simple and fun – that's why *Bust-A-Move* rocks hardcore. *Snood* is just annoying, like a seagull trying to steal your chips. This is mainly thanks to the badly designed blobs with faces that are just begging to be punched.

If you're prepared to squint at the screen when the 'Snoods' reach six-pixel wide proportions, then you might just be able to squeeze some fun out this game. Unfortunately, we really doubt it.

If you fire a Snood so it bounces around the well and off the bottom of the screen, it's game over instantly. You'd have thought that in the ten years since *Snood* was 'invented', at least one person might have gingerly raised their hand and said: "Wait... wait a minute... that's rubbish."

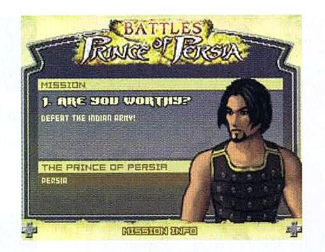
Instead, *Snood* is apparently rather proud of this game-ruining idiocy – in fact, the second level features just five Snoods in the centre of the screen, allowing you to knock yourself straight out of the game as many times as you like. And then some.

There's a teeth-grating little fanfare every time Snoods drop. The Snoods pull faces at you.

> **"SNOOD IS JUST ANNOYING, LIKE A SEAGULL TRYING TO STEAL YOUR CHIPS"**

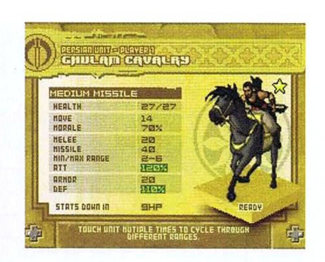
The World Tour idea is such a hackneyed puzzle game concept that we had to sit quietly in a corner to calm down. The game actually asks you if you want to save your high score. We just can't face it any more.

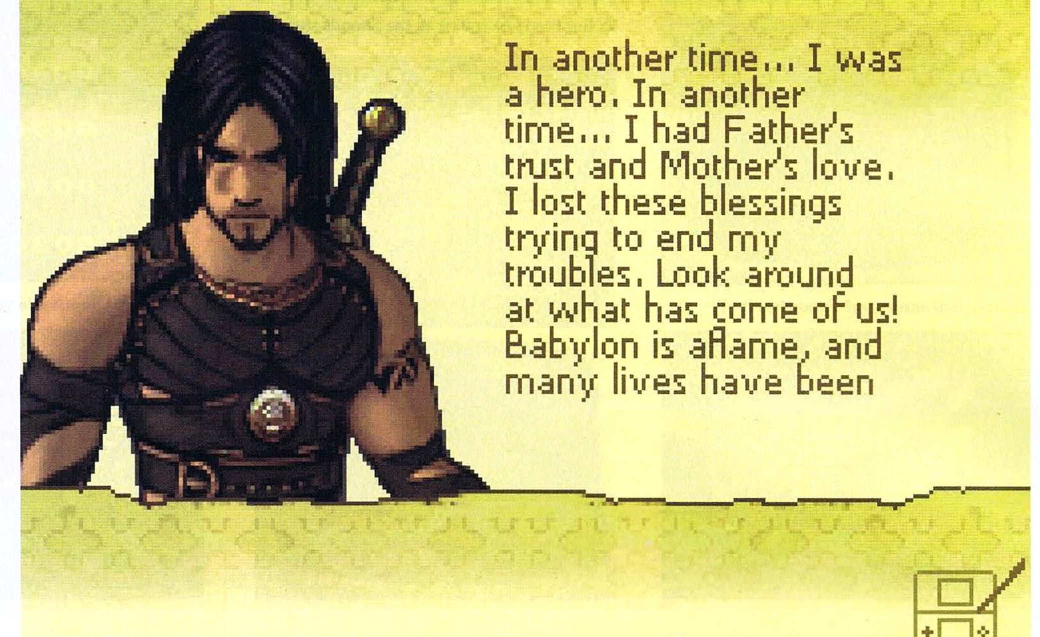
MARK GREEN













△ There are nine generals spread across three different races...

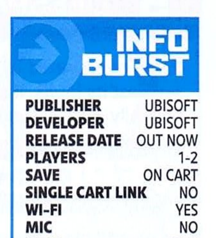


△ ...Indian, Persian and Deava, or demon. Each has its own special cards.

BATTLES OF PRINCE OF PERSIA

Jack, King, Queen – meet the Prince. Does his card-battling game make for a royal flush?

INFO BURST



PUBLISHER	UBISOFT
DEVELOPER	UBISOFT
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-2
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	NO
WI-FI	YES
MIC	NO
COST	£30





△ You can have a maximum of 30 different cards in a deck, and you can customise three decks for each of the races.

Does anyone else find this just a little bit weird? The Prince is by far the nimblest platforming hero of recent time, our very own AcroBatman who managed to make 3D movement graceful and satisfying, even if things did sometimes go downhill when he whipped his sword out. And now he's been reborn as a pack of cards, in a strategy game that's as slow and ponderous as moving a piano through a maze. Even more surprising than the whole card concept is the fact that while this game is nothing essential, fans of the genre are likely to find it quite entertaining.

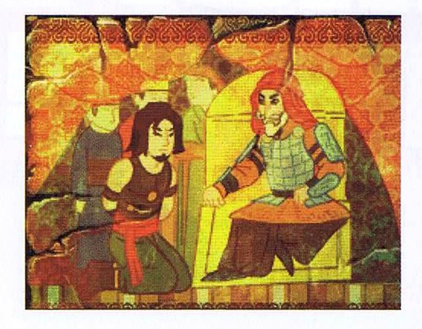
As it's a card-battling game, with dozens of its own particular rules and peculiarities, you're going to spend the first hour of play trying to suss out just what in the hell is going on. For example, here's a very brief outline of the game's structure. Take a deep breath, and here goes...

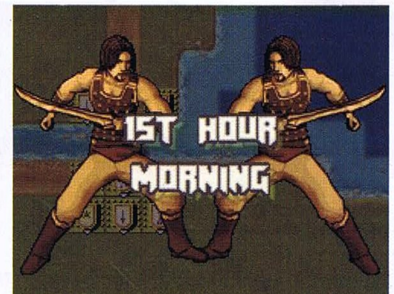
Battles are played out by the 'hour', each of which you start with seven cards pulled from your deck of 30. Each card has a number, which allows you to dish out that many move/attack orders to your troops in that round, and a special property, which is a skill that you can use instead of giving orders.

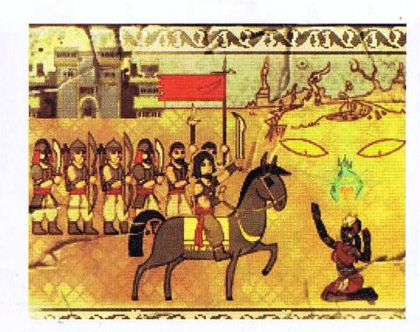
Once an order is given to a unit of troops, they can't be used until the next hour, and the card in question is either discarded or shuffled back into the pack. It's then your opponent's turn.

This continues until neither of

The Prince hits the deck







PLAY YOUR CARDS RIGHT

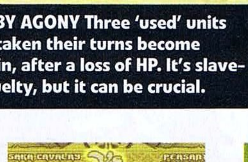
As you play, you'll earn more and more battle cards, some exclusively from multiplayer matches, that you can then integrate into your deck of 30. Here are three of the rare cards that we use the most…



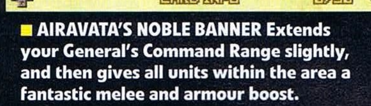


■ **WAY OF THE EARTH Extends the Command Range of your General. Essential for those yummy stat buffs that your leader can offer.**





■ **DRIVEN BY AGONY Three 'used' units that have taken their turns become active again, after a loss of HP. It's slave-driving cruelty, but it can be crucial.**



■ **AIRAVATA'S NOBLE BANNER Extends your General's Command Range slightly, and then gives all units within the area a fantastic melee and armour boost.**



△ **You can turn the battle animations off to speed things up. They aren't too exciting, but it's something to look at.**



△ **The odds are shown on the top screen.**



△ **Explore the map with the D-Pad and stylus.**



△ **Even the most special cards in the game offer very little in the way of visual effects when they're used.**

you has any cards left, or you both pass on the same round. Then it's on to the next hour, where each unit becomes refreshed and useable once again.

…And breathe in. If you got bored or confused by all that, then *Battles of Prince of Persia* probably isn't going to be the game for you. However, once you get into the groove of its combat system, there's a moderately engaging game to be played, and the compulsion to collect further cards and concoct the ultimate deck is pretty strong.

It's just a shame that it's all so underwhelming. The map that occupies the bottom screen is brutally simple, and while clarity is a good thing in a complex game, it's just too dull to look at. Ditto the battle animations, which feel about as punchy as a mouse click. And while the use of the stylus fits the game well, we'd have liked to have seen the dual screens used more slickly, such as when you're managing your card decks.

because the Prince had something particularly brilliant or original to offer the console.

It's not directly comparable to *Advance Wars: Dual Strike*, which is less complex but far tighter to play. However, if you're a strategy newbie, you'd be better advised to go for that – it simply tops *Battles* in terms of character and 'one more scrap' compulsion. *Battles* is an acceptable think-'em-up game, but nothing outstanding.

"YOU'RE GOING TO SPEND THE FIRST HOUR JUST TRYING TO SUSS OUT WHAT'S GOING ON"

Kudos should be given to Ubisoft for not attempting to create an overambitious 3D outing, a la *Splinter Cell*, but it's hard not to think that this game exists purely because the company wanted the *PoP* brand to reach DS, and not

STEVE BAILEY

YOU'VE GOT A POINT…

Fights also involve strategy, thanks to the points system. Each map has its own points total to aim for. For instance, destroying an enemy unit will usually get you one point, generals will earn you more, and some stages have optional objectives that could result in victory.



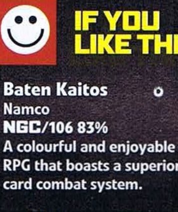
■ Card-collecting compulsion.
■ Stylus works well with this genre.



■ Completely lacking in charm.
■ Combat animations are dull.



IF YOU LIKE THIS…



Baten Kaitos
Namco
NGC/106 83%
A colourful and enjoyable RPG that boasts a superior card combat system.






6 VISUALS

Functional but lacking, and poor combat animations.




7 SOUNDS

Music from the original *PoP*, plus good sound effects.




6 MASTERY

The stylus is a boon, but the presentation feels a bit messy.




8 LIFESPAN

Hundreds of cards, plenty of missions and a Wi-Fi Versus mode.

VERDICT

A decent time-sapping distraction for strategy heads and fans of *Advance Wars*. Far from being a classic, mind.



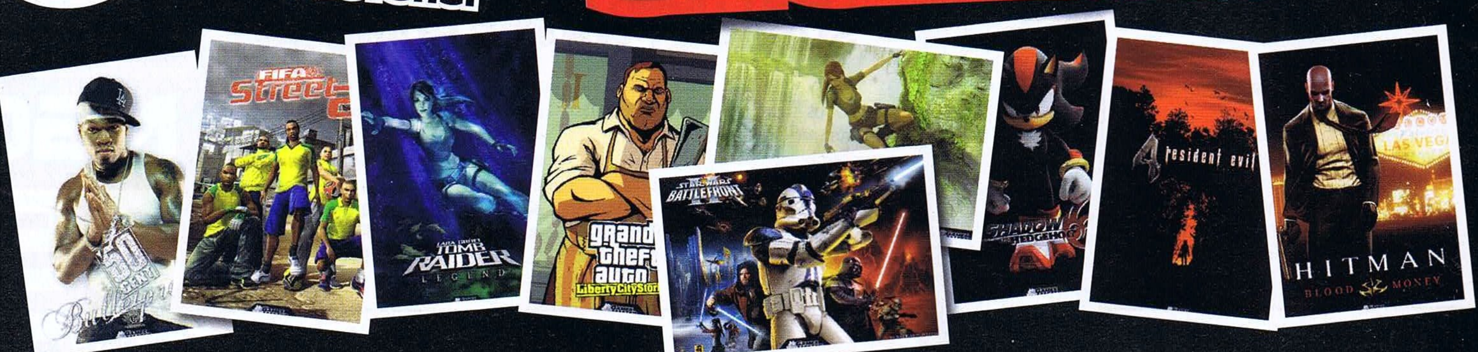

EVERY GAME! EVERY FORMAT! EVERY MONTH!



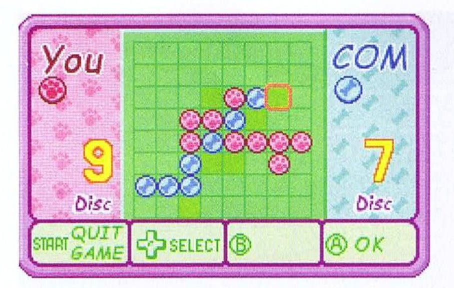




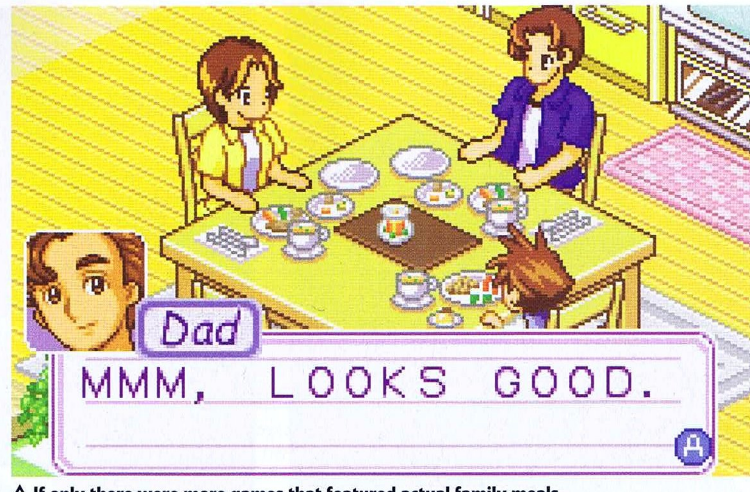
ON SALE NOW!



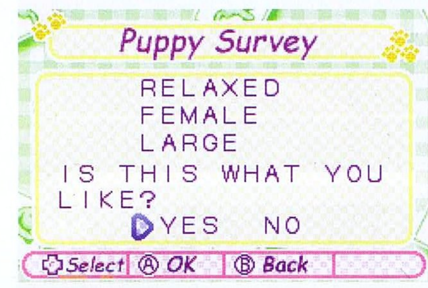




Δ Reversi – the best part of this game.



Δ If only there were more games that featured actual family meals.



Δ You know that's what we like.



Δ Ha! Read it and weep, *Nintendogs*.



Δ We scored us a special 'facehugger' dog. It's impregnating us with a chihuahua.

DOGZ

How much is that doggy? Too much…

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	UBISOFT
DEVELOPER	MTO
OUT	NOW
PLAYERS	1
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	YES
COST	£20



We remember *Dogz* back when it was a Game Boy Color game with the couldn't-make-it-up subtitle of 'Your Virtual Petz Palz'. It was an eight-colour simulation of the dog-owning experience. It was completely rubbish.

Of course, Nintendo has since borrowed the idea and caused a global pandemic of furry fever. And in response, *Dogz* has essentially given up. Ubisoft could have been feasting on pies filled with £20 notes if it had created a *Nintendogs* clone for GBA owners left stranded by Ninty. Instead, it's dirtied the whole concept, super-simplified it and created something that's as fun to pick up and play as a tennis ball sticky with dog slobber.

Like *Nintendogs*, you pick a pet from the store and then stuff your little terror full of meat and drink until it's happy. But it's hard to bond with your Pomeranian or Schnauzer when it's not you that's the owner, but a podgy little anime kid that you control. And it's even tougher to succumb to puppy love when tasks like teaching it to sit are low on a long list of tasks that include tedious *Sims*-style stuff like having breakfast, cooking dinner and hoovering the carpet.

The game is terrifyingly twee, too. For instance, every meal is a nails-down-the-blackboard exchange of "This is delicious, mom!" chirpiness, and it's the same every single time.

Everything is a soul-sappingly slow-going crawl: press A over and over again to train your pup, fetch your dad his newspaper (which is the dog's job, surely?), and watch the same 'go to school/leave school' animations over and over. And over. And over. Again.

If anything, we think that the game's title needs more z's: '*Dogzzz*' sounds about right.

MARK GREEN

> **"DOGZ IS AS FUN TO PICK UP AND PLAY AS A TENNIS BALL STICKY WITH DOG SLOBBER"**



- Big, bold and colourful visuals.
- 'Puppy Reversi'.
- Well presented.

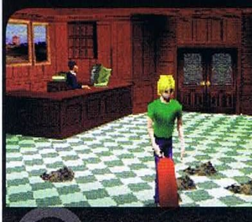


- Tedious as a brick.
- Puppies are clumsy.
- We get enough hoovering in real life.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

The Sims 2
EA
NGC/115, 67%
If you like cleaning crap off the floor, this is a much better bet.



7 VISUALS
Big and chunky, like a banana sandwich, but not much to see.

3 SOUNDS
Silly mum brings you home virtual CDs of classical music.

3 MASTERY
Apart from the prettiness, it could be on a mobile phone.

4 LIFESPAN
We were soon seeing how long our mutt lived without water.

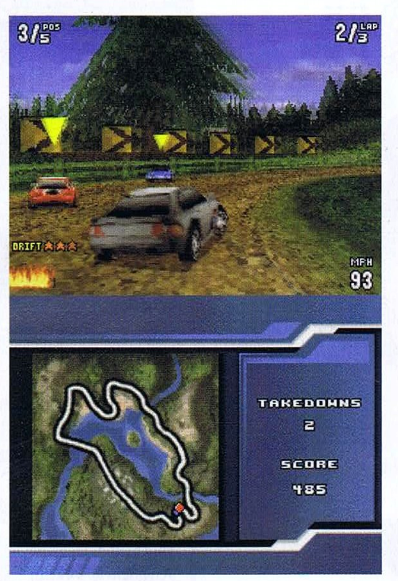


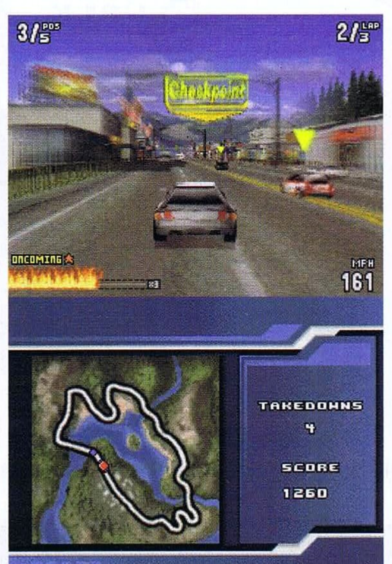
VERDICT
This could have been *Nintendogs* for Game Boy Advance owners. It isn't.

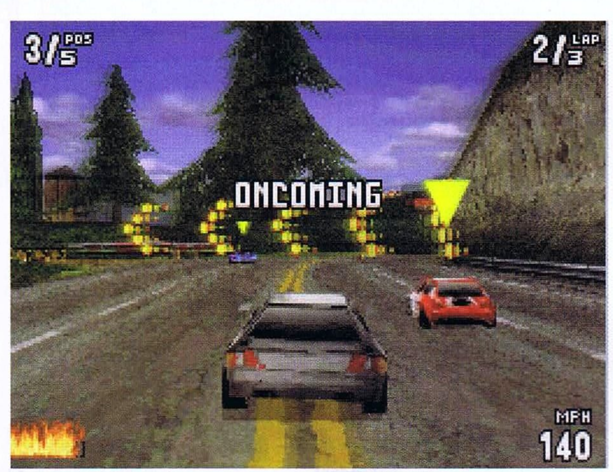












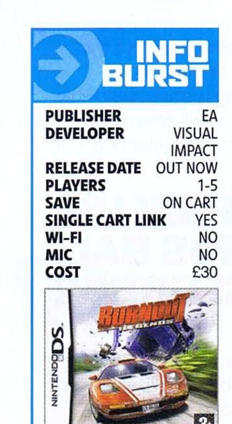
△ Part of the reason *Burnout* is so hugely successful is because it's such a visually dynamic game. Unfortunately, this DS version looks like it was drawn by a toddler with a crayon and a shaky hand.

BURNOUT LEGENDS

It's legendary alright, but for all the wrong reasons.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	EA
DEVELOPER	VISUAL IMPACT
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-5
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	YES
WI-FI	NO
MIC	NO
COST	£30





There are a few things in this world that just don't go well together and so are best kept separate, such as milk and orange juice, matches and squirrels, or automatic weapons and toddlers. And now to that long list we can add *Burnout* and the Nintendo DS.

Separate, they're beautiful, unique and wonderful additions to the world of gaming. Put them together and you've got an ugly compromise that devalues both.

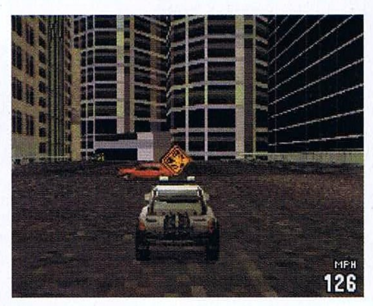
First you have the DS, an elegant handheld that's designed to equip developers with unique tools to create new gaming delights. What it isn't created for is replicating console games, just so they can be played on the go. So trying to squash a console game as epic as *Burnout* into the delicate casing of the DS just isn't going to work.

Also, it's missing the point. *Burnout* is about spectacle: beautifully realised automobiles hurtling through rush-hour traffic, then crumpling into wrecks of twisted bodywork and shattered glass because of one high-speed mistake. To achieve anything nearing this on the DS would have been miraculous. Unfortunately, there's been no divine intervention with this game.

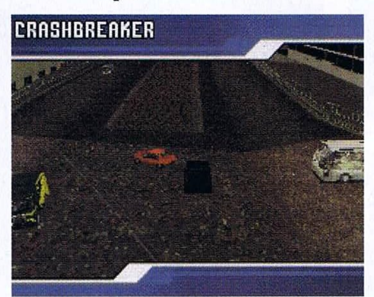
> **"IT HAS THE SAME FEATURES AS THE ARCADE GAME, BUT NONE OF THE CLASS"**

The top screen is where all the 'action' takes place, while the bottom screen shows the course map. All the race modes are here, including Road Rage, Pursuit and Crash. The World Tour option gathers these challenges together and lavishes you with new cars, just like the console version, and there's also a multitude of different Takedowns. However, ticking all the feature boxes doesn't make a good game, and what we have here is shaky sketch of *Burnout* – a potato-

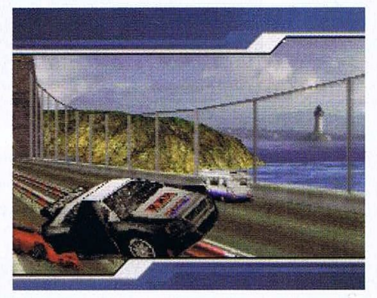
SPOT THE DIFFERENCE
It's called Burnout, and boy, it sure looks like it...

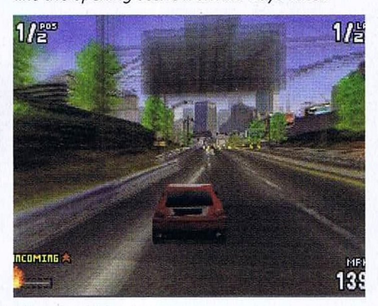


Here we have a junction from the Crash mode. It should be choked with traffic rolling along and at the mercy of your hurtling, modded monster-mobile. Instead, it looks like the opening scene from 28 Days Later.



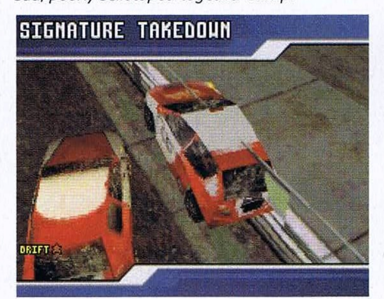
In the real Burnout*, you rattle up scores by creating H-bomb-sized damage. Here you get a Crashbreaker by rubbing a couple of buses the wrong way, and when it's detonated, it has all the impact of a damp party popper.*


This is Impact Time, which in the real game is an almost hypnotic display of splintering glass and twisted metal. Here you just get a clump of pixels ballooning into the air like a sad, poorly sellotaped-together blimp.

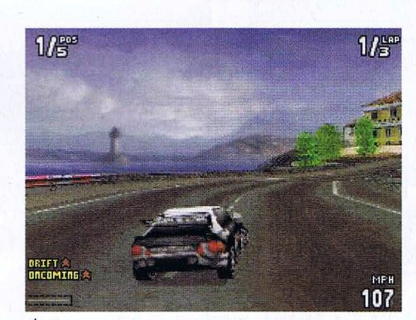


This should be the game at its most dynamic – full boost and zipping through the oncoming traffic with disaster only a heartbeat away. Instead, it's a blurry mess that's as thrilling to experience as muesli.


The Revenge Takedown should give the player an immense feeling of power and closure. On the DS, though, you almost feel sorry for the victims as they're permanently stuck in a badly ported mess.



As every Takedown is an anticlimax, it makes modes like Road Rage a rattle around a rubbish track, with no excitement, no sense of danger and no energy. Basically, none of the qualities that Burnout *is renowned for.*



△ As a straight racer, this is passable, but it's a massive letdown as a *Burnout* game.



△ The collision detection is particularly poor, which means you can't glance off other cars.



△ Look! Even the font they use to describe the Takedowns is unbelievably dull!

print port. It's a game that has the same features as the superb arcade console racing game but none of the class, excitement or impact.

First, the graphics would look average on GBA, which means there's hardly any sensation of speed, even when you manage a perfect lap with your finger permanently on the Boost button.

Then there are the Takedowns. These are the highlight of the whole *Burnout* series, and they make crashing your car a positive thing. Well, here they have all the impact of mouse stubbing its toe. All that happens is that a crappy car wobbles in the air and breaks a little. It should be the money shot but it hardly spends a penny.

What makes this conversion even more of a joke is the fact that the collision detection is pathetic. You should be able to scrape past oncoming buses to achieve a Near Miss, but it seems that pockets of air can send your car spinning off the road. Not that this should be a problem because there's hardly any traffic. As for Crash mode, there's naff all to crash into. It should just be called Mode.

EA has made *Burnout* fully multi-format, leaving developers Visual Impact with the tricky task of making it work. Sadly, it doesn't. The DS isn't about games like *Burnout*, which makes this an unnecessary release. All *Burnout Legends* manages to do is soil the name of *Burnout* and make the DS look inadequate. Basically, it just makes everyone unhappy.

DAVE HARRISON



△ There are two things to look at here: first, the sparks on the car when it's nowhere near the wall, and second, the complete lack of traffic. There's hardly any traffic in Crash mode either.



- The handling is OK.
- There's a decent amount of stuff to be unlocked.



- No real sensation of speed.
- No real sensation of fun.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Ridge Racer DS
DS
NGC/103 3/5
Touch-screen control is far too fiddly, but it's very fast and has good handling.





5 VISUALS
Average. Very average. It shames the *Burnout* name.



5 SOUNDS
Very forgetful, but at least it doesn't irritate too much.



3 MASTERY
Pathetic. Thinks the bottom screen is only for menus.

5 LIFESPAN
The Multiplayer and the World Tour options stretch out the misery.

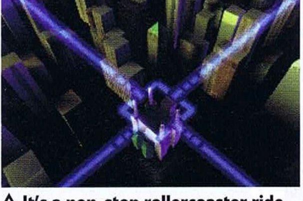
VERDICT
Hugely disappointing. Completely misses the point of both the DS and *Burnout*, and it disgraces them both.



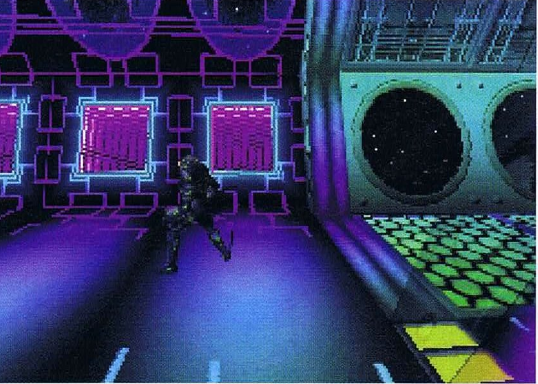
"Relentlessly vile"



Exciting martial arts superhero action in this amazing new game.



It's a non-stop rollercoaster ride through the Marvel universe!

Only the most excellent of programmers can get this kind of graphical performance from the DS. It's a technical miracle.





MARVEL NEMESIS

All your fave heroes, butchered in more ways than one.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	EA
DEVELOPER	EA
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1
SINGLE CART LINK	NO
SAVE	ON CART
COST	£30



This isn't just bad – it's relentlessly vile. A filthy, insulting mess of a fighter, it's barely finished and, quite frankly, barely playable without making you want to do a bit of sick in your mouth.

The collision detection is so bad it's laughable. Never before have we had the 'pleasure' of smacking someone without our fists having to connect with their face – simply punching thin air is enough to whittle down your opponent's life bar. Also, the game's main Arcade mode, which pits you against Marvel's finest, is a travesty. It's one unexciting duel after the next, which revolves around you hitting the attack button over and over again until you want to claw your eyes from their sockets.

The enemy AI is absolutely atrocious, with the opposition consisting of bumbling fools who don't seem to care whether they're supposed to be fighting or not, lazily letting off the odd attack. In fact, much of your success comes from their stupidity. They'll fall of ledges as though blind to their surroundings and, better yet, they'll get themselves stuck in a corner so you can simply walk up behind them and press the attack button time and again, with your opponent seemingly unable to get out or defend themselves. But then they probably want all this to end just as much as you do.

> **"A FILTHY MESS OF A FIGHTER, IT'S BARELY FINISHED AND, FRANKLY, BARELY PLAYABLE"**

Unbelievably, it gets worse. Oh yes. You see, you're actually expected to suffer this rubbish in order to unlock everything. Like they honestly expect you to play this for longer than it takes you to bring up your breakfast? We could barely tolerate it for five minutes, let alone the five hours it'll take you to see everything the game has to offer. Five hours that would be better spent burning in hell.

GERAINT EVANS

+

- You what?!

–

- Terrible presentation.
- Terrible AI.
- Terrible, unfinished game.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Shrek Super Slam
Activision
NGC/116 53%
Quite simply, it's the lesser of two evils.



4 VISUALS

It looks okay and moves okay. From a distance, anyway.



3 SOUNDS

Urgh. Urgh. Urgh. Urgh. Urgh. Urgh. Urgh. Urgh. Urgh.



5 MASTERY

We suppose the actual 3D engine is okay. We suppose.

6 LIFESPAN

Probably plenty here, but we couldn't bring ourselves to see.

VERDICT

Don't. Just... don't.

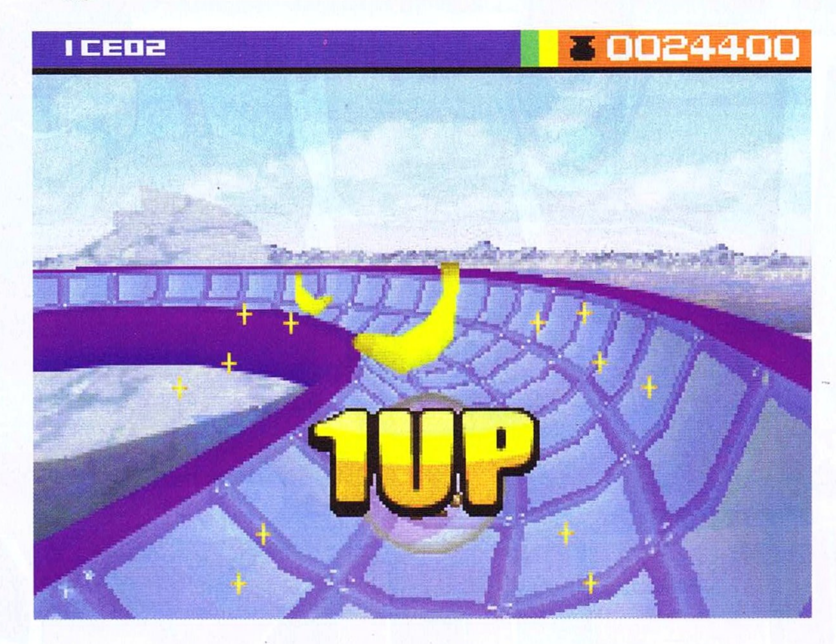


NGC 19



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COMIC STRIP ACTION!

"As thin as Nicole Kidman on a detox diet"





△ One of the hardest levels – you'll need to get lucky to make it through the gap.



△You can gain extra lives by grabbing the bananas lying around on the bonus levels.



△ If your plucky monkey hits any one of those moving obstacles then it'll be bashed off the course and you'll have to try all over again.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	SEGA
DEVELOPER	SEGA
RELEASE DATE	NOW (JAP) TBC (UK)
PLAYERS	1-4
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	YES
WI-FI	NO
MIC	NO
COST	5,040¥ (£25)



SUPER MONKEY BALL TOUCH & ROLL

You won't get huge amounts of pleasure from touching your monkey, you know…

The DS's strength is its line-up of unique games – things like *Trauma Centre*, *Nintendogs* and *Pac-Pix* simply can't be made for any other console, so you know that when you play them, you're getting an experience you won't get with Gamecube. And it's all down to the stylus. Although some viewed it with suspicion at first, it has helped change the way we play handheld games, in some cases making them more enjoyable than we'd have thought possible.

So when you take one of Gamecube's most enjoyable games and add stylus control, you'd expect it to be the best thing ever. Rolling around treacherous courses would appear to be one of the most natural ways to use the stylus. Unfortunately, it's just a bit too fiddly. Moving the monkey in a straight line and into a goal is simple enough on the early courses, but trying to get the ball to move uphill on a bendy path as thin as Nicole Kidman on a detox diet is just painful.



I GIVE UP!

This is where we gave up! After 59 courses, along came this beauty. It starts out hard enough, but then you get to a path about as wide as a tightrope, and it curves around before an uphill section at the end. Also, by the time you reach it you'll only have about ten seconds left. Unbelievable.

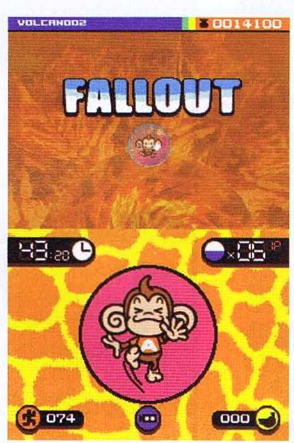
> **"YOU'D EXPECT IT TO BE THE BEST THING EVER, BUT IT'S JUST A BIT TOO FIDDLY"**

So after trying to master stylus control for hours, we ditched it and used the D-Pad instead. However, without the subtleties of the analogue control on the Gamecube version, rolling around some of the tighter courses is far from simple.

The dodgy camera doesn't help, of course – knocking into one obstacle or moving your ball a tad to the right or left can result in the camera shifting 180 degrees, rendering some levels unplayable. On one of the stages, for example, you have to roll forward on a thin platform, avoiding spikes coming at you from your left and right. The idea is to push the ball gently forward, stopping it in the small gaps between spikes. If you brush into the side of spike, you won't be knocked off the course, but


Δ Touch-screen controls work fine on easy levels like this.


Δ It looks nearly as good as the Gamecube *Monkey Ball.*



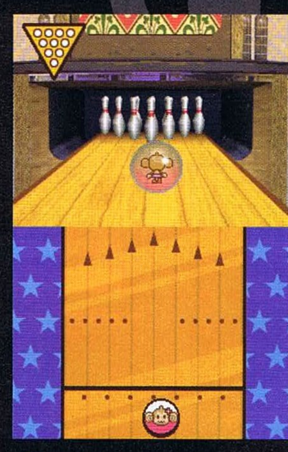
Δ Look at the anguish on the monkey's face. Look at it!

MINI MONKEY

There are six mini-games: four chavved from the Gamecube version and two new ones. We'd still like to see Monkey Tennis though…







■ MONKEY RACING This is stupid – instead of rolling the monkey forward, you just have to point (with the stylus) to where you want the monkey to roll. There's absolutely no accuracy and so you end up bashing into the walls.

■ MONKEY PUNCH As with the Gamecube version, the idea is to knock the other monkeys out of the ring. Stupidly, all the action is on the bottom screen, so your stylus hand will obscure the picture and you won't be able to see where your opponents are.

■ MONKEY BOWLING On Gamecube, you could correct your spin as the ball travelled down the lane. Not here – you set the spin first and then roll. As ever, it's difficult to roll in a straight line using the stylus without the aid of a ruler.





■ MONKEY HOCKEY This is one of the better games in two-player – you can play with a normal paddle or draw your own with the stylus. Then, again using the stylus, move it back and forth to defend your goal and hit the ball.

■ MONKEY SHOOTING Once again the controls hamper this stupid first-person (or monkey) shooter. You move around using the D-Pad and then tap the stylus on the enemies to fire at them. It's not exactly the most intuitive system ever.

■ MONKEY GOLF Ten out of ten. This is the only time where using the stylus actually improves the *Monkey Ball* experience. Aim, and then move your stylus back and forth to hit the ball. Some of the courses are hard, though.

the camera will move all the way around. This means you can't see what you're doing and so another spike will smack into the side of your ball, sending you flying. This is just one example of many unbelievably annoying moments in *Super Monkey Ball: Touch and Roll*, and yet strangely you'll still come back for more punishment.

See, as ever, it's annoying and frustrating, and after your 100th go on the same teeth-grindingly tricky level, you'll just want to chuck your DS in the road and be done with it. But if you did that, moments later you'd be leaping in front of a speeding car and retrieving your console for your 101st go.

The courses are so short that you never feel like you're losing your life to it, and even if it looks like you'll never be able to complete the final one, keep chipping away and you'll eventually crack it and get to see the credits.

Then there are the mini-games. These are usually as good as the challenges themselves, but you can only control these using the stylus, and while the air hockey and bowling games are passable in multiplayer, it's only really the mini-golf that'll hold your attention.

Up to now, people have experienced nothing but joy from *Monkey Ball*, but with the poor camera, fiddly controls and average mini-games, this will bring plenty of anger and frustration too. Of course it's addictive, but if you've got the Gamecube version, there's little point in buying Touch & Roll.

TOM EAST



Δ Goal! 1-0 to the monkey. The feeling of relief when you see those four sweet letters is amazing.



■ It's still incredibly addictive to play.
■ The golf mini-game is even better on DS.



■ Fiddly controls.
■ Dreadful camera.
■ Many repeated Gamecube courses.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Pac & Roll
NGC/111 4/5
Roll and jump through lots of platformy courses, collecting pills and dodging ghosts. Easier to control than *Monkey Ball*.



9 VISUALS
Sharp, chunky and colourful, it looks as good as the Gamecube version.

8 SOUNDS
The jolliest tunes we've heard since *Mario Kart*. But that wasn't long ago!



6 MASTERY
It's smooth, but the controls and camera are very annoying.

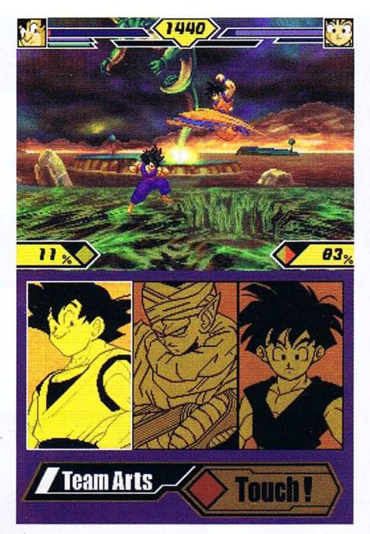


9 LIFESPAN
100 courses, good multiplayer mode and loads of mini-games.

VERDICT
Yet another addictive *Monkey Ball* game, but with better controls and a decent camera it could have been much better.



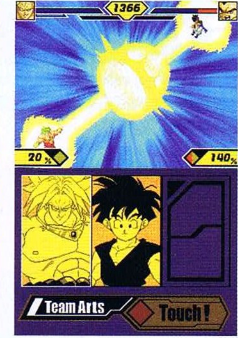
"Fights are wide-open affairs"



Touching to switch characters is fiddly.



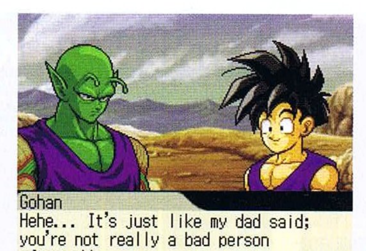




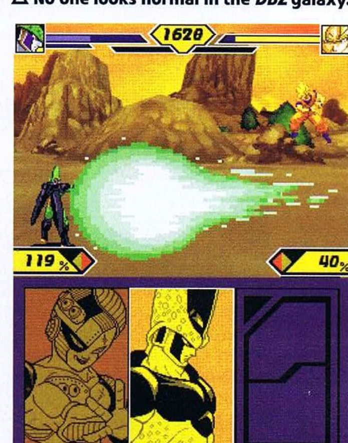
Oddly, *DBZ* looks better when it isn't moving.



Some of the tag-team moves look great. Not this one.



No one looks normal in the *DBZ* galaxy.





- 30 fighters and plenty to do.
- Good fun for *Dragonball Z* fans.



- Touch screen ruins the tag-team system.
- Long-winded animations.
- We got beaten by a baby.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Jump Superstars
NGC/112 4/5
Half beat-'em-up, half comic, and all fightier than a miffed kangaroo.





5 VISUALS

Interesting backdrops, but the fights unfold unspectacularly.

6 SOUNDS

DBZ catchphrases will please the obsessed. "Now it's my turn!"

5 MASTERY

Not a huge step up from the GBA original, and it's stylus-free.

7 LIFESPAN

Decent Multiplayer and a big Story mode: two bloodied thumbs up.

VERDICT

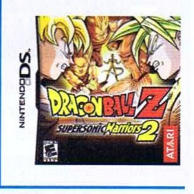
If you're a hardcore *Dragonball Z* fanatic, you might be able to forgive this game's failings. *Might.*





INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	ATARI
DEVELOPER	BANPRESTO
RELEASE DATE	NOW (JAP/US)
PLAYERS	1-2
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	NO
WI-FI	NO
MIC	NO
COST	£30



DRAGONBALL Z SUPERSONIC WARRIORS 2

Nothing's quite as tough as their hair gel...

The original *Supersonic Warriors* wasn't just one of the only GBA beat-'em-ups we could play without wanting to punch in our own faces with boredom; it was also the anime-faithful *Dragonball Z* game that fans had been gagging for. On DS, though, it's lost some of its sparkle.

Supersonic Warriors 2's tag-team fights are all about Ki: you charge it up with successful hits or by holding R, and when you've got enough Ki, you can go Super Saiyan. This means you can punch like Shayne Ward's mum and activate some impressive double-character drubbings.

Thanks to that, and the ability to float like a butterfly anywhere around the screen, fights are wide-open affairs. Each player inevitably backs off to charge their Ki and protects their personal space with long-range attacks.

It's quite good stuff, even in Single-player mode, where success unlocks new moves and better character combos. Meanwhile, the Story mode rewrites *DBZ* history for fan pleasure and provides a fairly lengthy challenge.

> **"IT'S TOO EASY TO DRIBBLE OUT A WEAK POWER SHOT"**

Unfortunately, *Supersonic Warriors 2* squeezes so many moves onto the R button that it's too easy to dribble out a weak power shot when you meant to do a strong one, or rocket towards your opponent when you'd intended to shield up. You know what you want to do, but you just can't quite pull it off.

The multi-character system is similarly troubled – tag-teaming with the touch-screen is so fiddly that we shunned it completely. Throw in some confused AI (our first battle with Buu ended without us getting a single punch in, while on the next try, we downed him in seven seconds), and your virtual fists are best aimed elsewhere.

With a great game like *Jump Superstars* available on import, avoid this game like you would a green Demon King wearing kitchen roll around his neck.

MARK GREEN



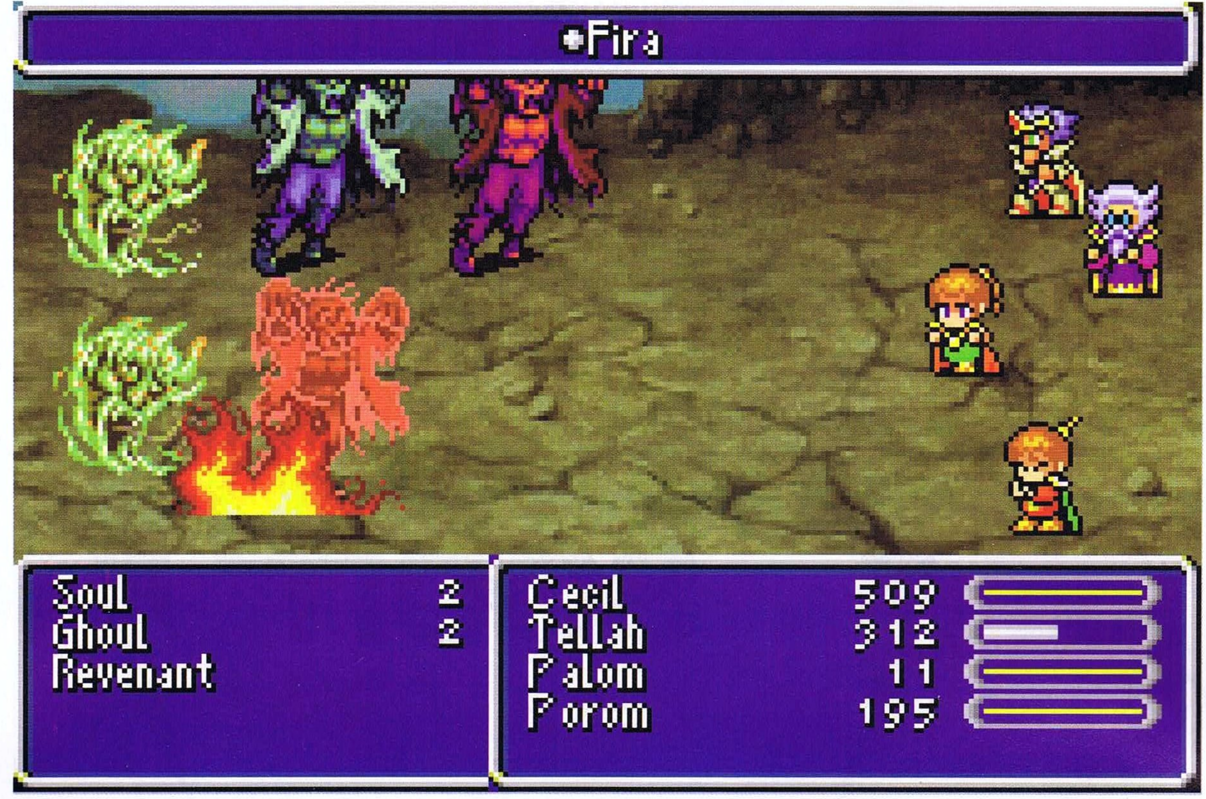
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NGC



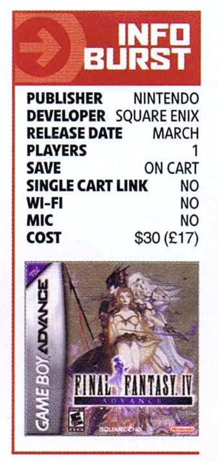
"All the killing and maiming catches up with Cecil"



△ As you progress through the game and your party becomes larger, so do the battles you must face. Eek!

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	SQUARE ENIX
RELEASE DATE	MARCH
PLAYERS	1
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	NO
WI-FI	NO
MIC	NO
COST	$30 (£17)



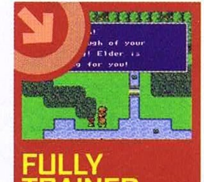
FINAL FANTASY IV ADVANCE

The classic adventure gets ready for another quest, this time taking its RPG brilliance onto Nintendo's handheld...

So it's *Final Fantasy 2*? Or *3*? If only Roman numerals were easier to understand and Square didn't muck us around so much changing the bloody numbers, things would be so much simpler. Here we have *Final Fantasy IV Advance*, which equates to *Final Fantasy II* on the SNES all those years ago… and it's one of the most solid and polished GBA ports around. The environments, the music and the story are all superb. In fact, the script has an absolutely terrific translation, making this much, much closer to its original incarnation than the SNES version released in 1991.

FFIV is basically a story of redemption, friendship and self sacrifice. You play a Dark Knight named Cecil, the captain of a fancy airship squad known as The Red Wings. You're ordered by your boss, the King of Baron, to hunt down and capture all the crystals of the world, and you're told to do so by any means necessary. After a little while, all the killing and maiming catches up with Cecil and he begins to question the king's plans. Naturally, the king doesn't like this insubordination all that much. He demotes Cecil before sending him off on a mission to the town of Mist, and that's where things really start to get interesting.

It's difficult to discuss the story without giving too much away, but rest assured, it's fantastic. The pacing, characterisation and plot twists are magnificent, and it even has characters you'll care about.



FULLY TRAINED

Having appeared on a number of different consoles over the years, FFII has always been a popular choice among die-hard fans when it comes to role-playing. Now there's this updated version: with superior graphics, an all-new score and a plethora of extras on offer, it's the best way to experience this game.

There's more than enough variety with the characters alone to keep the plot from ever feeling tired.

The quick and simple battle mechanics in the game are very nice indeed. Having the option of the Active Time Battle system instead of the classic turn-based nonsense adds some speed and intensity to the proceedings, and with the all-new Quicksave feature, you can take a break from your game just about anywhere, should you need to. This is actually something of a godsend because if you die with nothing left to heal you, it's game over and all those hours of play are lost.

With crisp, updated graphics, the game world itself looks mighty tasty on your little GBA's small screen, and we'd say its relatively

REAL-TIME BATTLES REVEALED
Use the Active Battle System in FFIV like a pro...



The Active Battle System (ATB) is a new battle mechanic for FFIV, where the order of play is determined by the highest agility value. This applies to both ally and enemy.



As opposed to a standard turn-based battle, with ATB, the results of your actions are reflected immediately. This makes for far more intense and exciting combat.



After making your move, the time before you're able to act again varies according to your character's abilities. The higher their skills, the faster they'll be able to strike again.



Always be aware that your enemies can still attack you while you're selecting your own commands, meaning you have to think fast and move faster.



This applies to magic too. An incantation begins when a spell is selected, and the spell is cast when it ends. How long this takes varies depending on the type of magic used.



Basically, you have to keep your wits about you at all times. With the enemy following the same rules as you, the battles are fair but occasionally cruel.



△ The graphics really suit the small screen.



△ The bestiary lets you see what you've slain.



△ High drama runs throughout the story.

short length (about 20 hours) is perfect for pick-up-and-play action for the role-player on the move.

It's not all just old stuff though. Rather than converting the aged SNES version directly, Square has taken a more generous route and added a bundle of extra features to the mix. Some are small (the front and rear battle formations from the Japanese version are back, and they've redone the character portraits), while others are far bigger. A couple of new bosses are in there, along with two exclusive dungeons, adding a nice bit of replay value to a game that's already been played to death by hardcore fans over the years. Also, the ability to recruit additional party members near the final moments is a more than welcome addition. Throw in a couple of mini-games, a bestiary and a harder difficulty setting for your enjoyment and this will excite both old and new fans of the series.

"IT'S ONE OF THE MOST SOLID AND POLISHED GAME BOY ADVANCE PORTS AROUND"

MIKE OLDMAN



△ Getting around on foot can be a slow and tiring process, so why not take it easy and catch the boat?



- New dungeons and bosses.
- Great real-time battle system.



- Feels a little old at times.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Final Fantasy I & II: Dawn of Souls
Nintendo
NGC/101 78%
The first two games in this classic series superbly remade.



7 VISUALS
Updated visuals that are clean and solid. Ideal for the Micro.

8 SOUNDS
A good score that now sounds better than ever.

8 MASTERY
One of the best *Final Fantasy* games just got even better.

7 LIFESPAN
20-odd hours of fun, with loads of extras thrown in to boot.

VERDICT
Don't let the fact that it's an update put you off. Easy to pick up and impossible to put down, this is a classic RPG.



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Not quite

The weird world of cucco-blasting,

Some people pay tribute to Nintendo's genius by repeatedly going for 'just one more map' on *Advance Wars DS*, right until they hear the sound of a motorised milk carrier whirring past the window. Others recreate *Zelda* using the medium of dance, or put on a pair of dungarees and stuff mushrooms down their throat until they grow to twice their size and/or die. But for one small, dedicated troupe of keyboard-tapping number-heads, there's only one way to pay respect to the digital deity of Nintendo, and that's to make their own games.

This is why you're just a few words and mouse-clicks away from gunning down Goombas with a Plasma Rifle, seeing the original Metroid from a 45-degree angle, and finding out the Polish word for 'Mario'. (It's 'Mario'.)

THE SIMPLE STUFF

Uncomplicated games sporting a Ninty badge

Nintendo crammed the 'vs' version of *Mario Bros* inside four different GBA games, yet we only know one man who played and enjoyed it - and that was by accident. Meanwhile, 30,000 netters once clamoured to download *Super Mario War* (right, www.dxdec.com/hosted/72dpiarmy), a fan-made battle game that throws four Marios onto the screen for a chaotic game of 'I crush-a your head'. It's testament to the untapped market for Mario-on-Mario action.

Super Mario Sketch (www.caiman.us/scripts/fw/f1824.html) shows what Miyamoto's masterpiece might have looked like if Ninty's boss brain had been born 50 years before microchips - a scrawly, pen-and-paper adventure with less animation than Walt Disney's frozen head. Alternatively, in *Make Mario Dizzy* (http://mfgg.net/files/17/make_mario_dizzy.zip), you simply wiggle the mouse as fast as you can to spin him on the spot. It's best summed up by one online review that simply reads: "Your arm will fall off."

Zelda fans in the house? Try *Tingle Tactics* (http://forums.zeldagaming.net/index.php?download=4). It's the cutesy shooter that finally lets you murder a Cucco without invoking the all-squawking Cucco Death Revenge Squad. You also see that windmill bloke pumping his accordion like never before.



MARIO WORLD OVER RUN

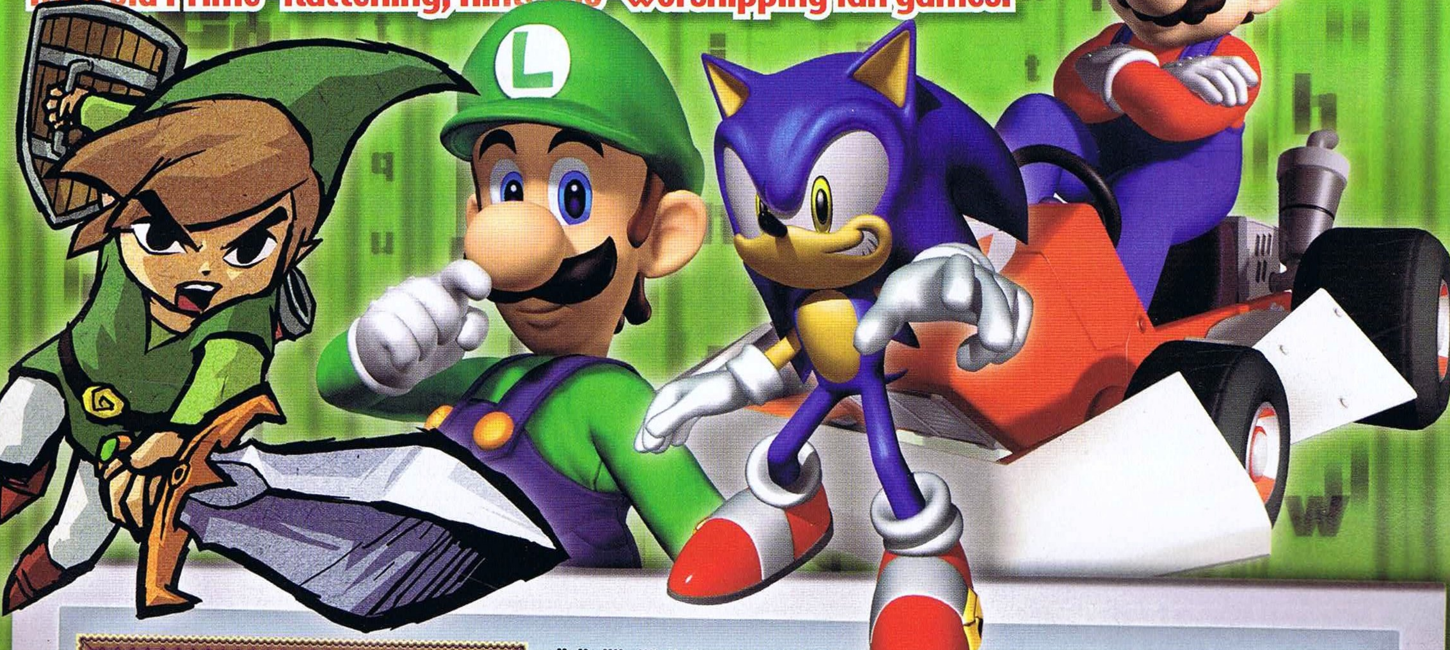
Although Shiggy might raise an eyebrow at Luigi carting an Uzi around - Prof E. Gadd's obviously graduated to weapons development - *Mario World Over Run* (right, http://mario-world-over-run.freeonlinegames.com/) is actually a Ninty-friendly game. You protect a tower by blasting flying gits, and there's not a drop of blood in sight.





Nintendo

Metroid Prime-flattening, Nintendo-worshipping fan games.





MASH-UPS

Nintendo with a retro twist

If you've got enough years on you to remember when Nokia's *Snake* was the kind of game you'd pay £6 to see running in black-and-white Lego pixels on your telly, you'll appreciate the retro style of Moldorm (left, www.justzelda.zeldacentral.net/moldorm.zip). It's simple tail-chasing with *Zelda*'s very own fire monster. Just don't select Speed 1 unless your diary's completely clear for at least the next week.

Over in the Kirby corner, there's *Astaroids* (above, http://kirby.classicgaming.gamespy.com/fan/fan games/astaroids/astaroids.zip), in which the blob of chewing gun is shot into space (not permanently, sadly) to mimic Atari retro king *Asteroids*. Primitive, true, but still worth waving in front of the faces of the people behind *Kirby Air Ride*.

And Mario? The unofficial *Mario Basketball* reminds us what sports games were like before Dr Cornelius Dimension made his third discovery on the trot - simple but compulsive 2D slamdunking. With a Yoshi Egg.



SUPER MARIO PAC

Super Mario Pac (left, www.hermitgames.com/mariopac.php) mixes *Mario* up with *Jetpac*, a game that Rare made for the ZX Spectrum in the days when it was based just down the road from the factory that made Jaffa Cakes. Mario bungs bubbles at Boos, Koopas and Cheep-Cheeps, while building a special warp pipe to happiness. Internet high score at time of writing: 682,000. NGC high score: 3,200.

UNOFFICIAL SEQUELS

New digitainment from old



Borrowing bits and bobs from *Super Mario Bros*, *Yoshi's Island* and everything in between, the Halloween-themed *Super Mario Blue Twilight DX* (below, www.marioween.tk) is a 2D Mario platform-'em-up that's racked up 20,000 downloads, and it even has concept art and a director's commentary.

Other fan games, such as *Mario Pipe Network* (www.planetfreeplay.com/game/Mario-Pipe-Network/) and *Mario Forever* (www.acid-play.com/download/super-mario-3-mario-forever) look a bit weak by comparison. Although the latter must be the only Mario game with a Polish language option.

In fact, there are more *Mario* fan-games to work through than *Mega Man* games (just), so you'll only have time for the cream of the non-Mazza crop, such as *Zelda Classic* (www.zeldaclassic.com). Originally a simple reworking of the NES game, it's now a bloated create-your-own-game project that allows you to fashion the 'Jordan rescuing Peter Andre' adventure of your dreams. Then there's *GoldenEye Source* (top left), the fan-made 'mod' for *Half-Life 2* that recreates Rare's stun-shooter in painstaking detail.



METROID REDEMPTION

Leading the charge of the sequels Nintendo never made is *Metroid Redemption* (left, http://metroid.homestead.com/files/metroid_redemption.rar). Set straight after the events of *Metroid Fusion*, it has Samus fighting to clear her name in the only way a bemuscled super-shoulder-padded bounty huntress knows how: with her big gun-arm.

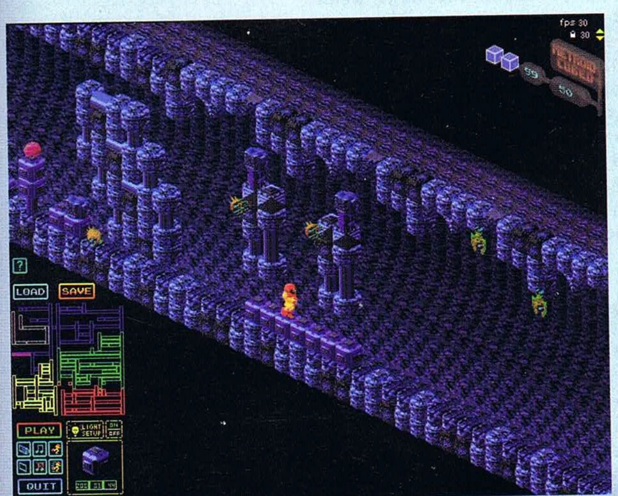
2D TURNED 3D

Three into two will go

Ambitious attempts to recreate old SNES games in 3D tend to stall when people realise there's little time for game creation between sleep, dinner and sitting on the sofa gazing into the middle distance. At least two attempts to drag Japanese celeb-RPG *Dragon Warrior* into 3D (http://overholt.thinkhost.com/dragwar3d/) have faltered, coughed and fallen on their own sword.

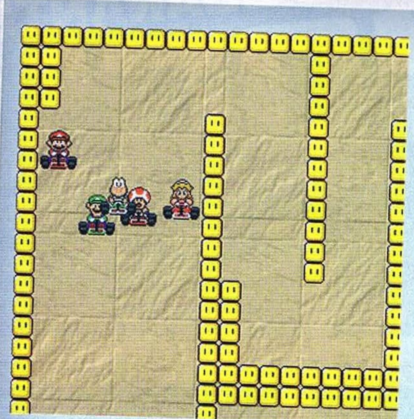
It's not just the lack of time that scuppers projects like this. Revered SNES RPG *Chrono Trigger* would probably be blazing 3D-style from a monitor near you if Square Enix hadn't bombarded the makers of the *Chrono Trigger* Remake Project with legal pain. "We didn't realised that a fan game would be so harmful to your business," whimper the coders on the now-barren site (www.chrono-trigger.com).

The closest you'll get to a 3D-ised 2D game is by turning to our blue-spiked rival of old. *Sonic Robo Blast* (above right, www.srb2.org) is a straight shooter, but one that recreates the green pastures of Sonic's sparkly 16-bit worlds in such a special way that it's like chocolate for your eyes.



METROID CUBED

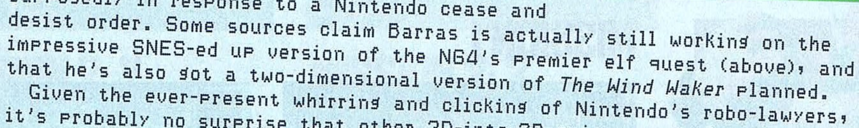
We've got a little bit of a soft spot for *Metroid Cubed* (left, http://pages.infinit.net/voxel/home.htm) because it takes a very special fan to wonder what NES Metroid might have looked like from a bird hovering overhead at a 45-degree angle, and an even more special one to actually make it happen. The creator also plans to trap *Super Mario Bros* and *The Legend of Zelda* inside his little box, while cackling maniacally.



3D TURNED 2D

Waving goodbye to dimension three

This is where we get whipped up in the controversy tornado – or so the story goes. *Ocarina of Time 2D* (www.zeldadungeon.net/FG.php) transformed Daniel Barras into an instant legend, but he's since tucked the project out of reach, supposedly in response to a Nintendo cease and desist order. Some sources claim Barras is actually still working on the impressive SNES-ed up version of the N64's premier elf quest (above), and that he's also got a two-dimensional version of *The Wind Waker* planned.



Given the ever-present whirring and clicking of Nintendo's robo-lawyers, it's probably no surprise that other 3D-into-2D epics are a bit thin on the ground. The closest you're going to get is *Mario Kart X-Racer* (top left, www.marioportal.com/fangames/MarioKartcpu.zip), which transforms the flawless nitro-powered charms of *Mario Kart* into a top-down five-player 2D maze game that will make your PC feel ill. Or *Luigi's Ghost Escape* (www.marioportal.com/fangames/luigighost.zip), which we'll pretend never happened.



METROID PRIME 2D

You don't need to feed Einstein's brain in through your ear to work out what *Metroid Prime 2D* (left, www.mp2d.co.uk/), is: watched over by *Metroid* überfan Andrew Mills, it's being worked on by a team of at least 785, with proper Project Managers and everything. It's now close to its first demo release. Take a look and ask yourself why Nintendo cancelled its own 2D *Metroid*. (Answer: not because of this.)

ADVERGAMES

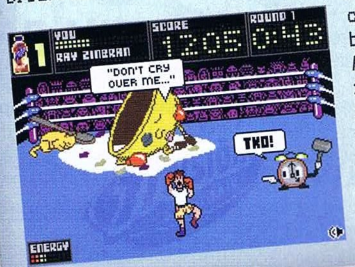
Big businesses become fans

Proving it knows its market, PowerGen decided to create a game to tie in with its competition to find the world's oldest boiler, and gave a subtle nod to Mario that must have left all those pensioners with 70-year-old airing cupboards scratching their heads. In *The Boiler Game* (www.oldestboiler.co.uk/game/game.htm), you play as dungareed plumbers – sorry, boiler engineers – Pete or Paula, and dodge enemies to fix! That! Boiler! Hot stuff.

Mountain Dew doesn't mess about with that 2D rubbish, though – it wants to 'speakz to da kidz' (our words). As such, *Mountain Dew Skateboarding* (http://mountaindew.com/digital_dew/arcade/) apes the venerable *Tony Hawk's* and its sparkling 21st-century 3D. You can just imagine the whooping marketeers plastering Mountain Dew logos on every pixel they could get their hands on.

BREAKFAST BRAWL

As featured in our Retro pages a few months back, Dannon's game to promote its Frusion range of healthy breakfast bars (www.frusion.com/game.asp) has been put together with the kind of care that you wish could be spoon-fed to *Mario Party*'s developers. This is a loving recreation of *Punch-Out!!*, the surreal goal being to punch bowls of cornflakes in the face. We never got used to seeing the cat lick up the 'brains'.



WAIT – IS THIS LEGAL?

It was all going so well for fan games – up until the point where Nintendo sent a little love letter to Gaming Universe, informing it that its collection of Nintendo-based software presented "clear violations of Nintendo's rights in the characters and audio visual works protected by US and international copyrights and trademarks". This was the trigger for the remakes of *Ocarina of Time* and *Chrono Trigger* going down in flames, even though companies such as Rockstar were quoted as saying that fan games were "extremely flattering", so long as their creators didn't try to turn a profit from them.

And that's the clincher: Nintendo presumably wouldn't want to attract negative press by smacking down people who express their Mario love through the art of game, but when cash registers start ringing, or games start passing themselves off as official Nintendo products, Ninty will understandably seek to protect its intellectual property rights.

You can be sure of this, though – you can't be taken to prison, sued or mocked for playing fan games. Actually, maybe you can be mocked. Especially if you're playing *Yoshi Manhole*.

MORE!

Mario Fan Games Galaxy (http://mfgg.net/) is your home for Mario-based games, including as many pitiful clones of *Mario Bros* as your stomach can take.

Zelda Dungeon (www.zeldadungeon.net/) has a small collection of the Zelda-related games that brave souls have slipped past Nintendo's cybersolicitors.

Rainbow Resort (http://Kirby.classicgaming.gamespy.com/fan/fan games/) is the destination for all you Kirby fans. 'Fan', is it, these days?



Win three stars on every mission in

MARIO KART DS





WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

The fifth outing for the Mario Kart series, this version offers kart racing in the palm of your hand, and worldwide racing in online tournaments. While the single-player races can seem almost cruelly unfair, everything else has been tweaked to perfection, making it a sublime karting experience.



WHAT WE SAID IN ISSUE 114

From the all-important handling to the truly imaginative track design, from the visual flair to the generous array of game modes, this is a title that ticks many more boxes than most other games. Oh, and you can play against others in online tournaments too!



MISSION 1



MISSION 1: 1

During the starting countdown, hit the gas after the '2' appears on-screen and starts growing. You'll begin with a speed boost that makes clearing this mission easier. This is a Rocket Start. Always use it in Mission mode, unless told not to.



MISSION 1: 2

Coins always appear in pairs during this mission. Collect the first two and then use mini turbo boosts to quickly reach the following pairs. Now you just have to use light taps of the D-Pad to align your kart with the next set of coins.



MISSION 1: 3

All item boxes here contain mushrooms. You need to collect them all to get three stars. Remember that the third item box is down the hill to your immediate right after the second box. Hit all the turbo pads and you'll have time to spare.



MISSION 1: 4

Don't Rocket Start! Just start normally and collect the first item box. Tap X while the items are scrolling and you'll increase your chances of getting a star. Drive carefully and stop briefly near the Cheep Cheeps to knock them out.



MISSION 1: BOSS

Don't turbo start. Drive forward normally after you start and Big Bully will charge at you. Veer around him and pick up the item box, which contains a triple mushroom. Quickly turn around and use the mushrooms to boost into Big Bully.



MISSION 1: 5

Do a corner turbo as you go through the second gate, then align yourself with the third gate and release the boost. Bear left through the fourth gate, hopping so you corner as sharply as possible. Aim toward the sixth gate as you go through the fifth.



MISSION 1: 6

Your controls are reversed in this mission and you won't slow down while making normal turns. Take the first two corners as tightly as possible. You'll need to take a wider turn on the third curve, otherwise you'll hit the wall.



MISSION 1: 7

The first item box yields a triple mushroom. Save it for quickly crossing the empty area you reach after collecting the first two groups of coins. Be sure not to miss the next three coins, which are near the wall to your left.



MISSION 1: 8

Stay towards the left side of the track. Do a corner turbo as you approach the first curve, while avoiding the pipe. Release the boost as soon as you hit the red/white stripe. Cut the next two corners as sharply as possible but don't drift.

MARIO KART DS

Get a three-star rating on every track

MISSION 2



MISSION 2: 1

If you hit the boxes with the side of your kart, you won't slow down. Use a quick hop-turn left to hit the fourth box, then drive down the dock and hit the fifth and sixth boxes. Drive in reverse to get off the dock, then turn left.



MISSION 2: 2

Don't Rocket Start. Instead, drive in reverse at the start to get the coin behind you, then start going forward and collect the lines of coins as they appear. There's no real trick to this mission other than having to back up to get the first coin.



MISSION 2: 3

Use corner turbo boosts to clear the gates quickly, and hopping turns to take other bends as sharply as possible. Hit all of the mushrooms to get extra speed boosts. Be sure to boost over the grassy area so you don't lose any speed.



MISSION 2: 4

When you get to the S-bend, don't turn. Instead, go straight and collect the first item box. The final box is the most difficult to collect: hit the final turbo panel, veer right, and then grab the fifth item box before you complete the turn.



MISSION 2: BOSS

Stay in front of the boss at all times. There are green shells in every item box, and three shots will defeat him. Back up to get an item box – that sets up your first two attacks. Now drive between the Boss's fists for your final attack.



MISSION 2: 5

Get the first six coins and hop-turn to line up with the next three. Be careful not to skid on the sand. Collect six more coins, then hop-turn right to get the next three. Hit the turbo ramp for three more coins. Note that you must get these in one jump.



MISSION 2: 6

This one is easy. Be sure to stay clear of the bomb explosions because they'll knock you around and waste your valuable time. Aim your bombs very carefully before launching them – when they hit, they'll explode immediately.



MISSION 2: 7

The main trick to this mission is that there are some pairs of side-by-side gates, and you have to make sure you pass under a particular one. Go through the left gate of the first pair and the right gate of the second pair.



MISSION 2: 8

All the item boxes in this mission contain stars, so grab and use them all. You must also build corner turbo boosts while using a star. The stars make you drift further when building up the boost, so you'll need to change your timing for cornering.



TIPS EXTRA

THE TIPS YOU NEED FOR THE GAMES YOU'RE PLAYING…

SHADOW THE HEDGEHOG

GAMECUBE

UNLOCKABLE SONGS

AIR FLEET THEME
Play this level once.

ALL HAIL SHADOW
Defeat the pure good side.

ALMOST DEAD
Defeat any of the evil sides.

BLACK BULL BOSS THEME
Defeat this boss.

BLACK COMET THEME
Play this level once.

BLACK DOOM BOSS THEME
Defeat this boss.

MISSION 3



MISSION 3: 1

Veer left and grab the item box that appears in front of you. Don't go past the bumpers on your left. Get a star from the item box and use it immediately. Keep doing this until you clear the mission and you should make the three-star ranking.



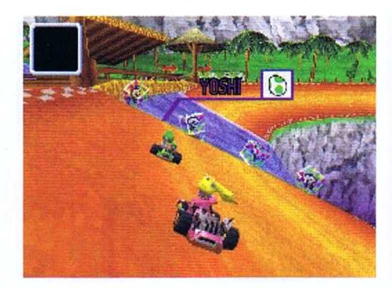
MISSION 3: 2

Drive backwards and go to your left. Turn right around the corner, go down the hill and through the second gate. Go straight into the third gate. Turn left at the next corner and go through gate four, then turn left and down the path to gate five.



MISSION 3: 3

Once you get the first five coins, turn left to get the rest. When you make this turn, hold down the brake button and the gas so you make a very slow and precise turn. Don't stop after this, otherwise the Chomp Chomp will attack you.



MISSION 3: 4

Get stars out of the item boxes in this mission whenever you can. Yoshi will boost past you at the start, so drift behind him until you get a boost of speed. Use your items and the boost to pass Yoshi at the waterfall.



MISSION 3: BOSS

Use corner turbo boosts to get ahead of the Goomboss. Take the first turn as sharply as possible and veer left around him. The Goomboss will crash into you from behind, which is harmless. Now you just have to hold on to your lead.



MISSION 3: 5

Drive straight through gates one and five, but remember that going through gate five won't count the first time you pass through it. The eighth and final gate for this mission is hidden on the ground. Drive right off the platform to get to it.





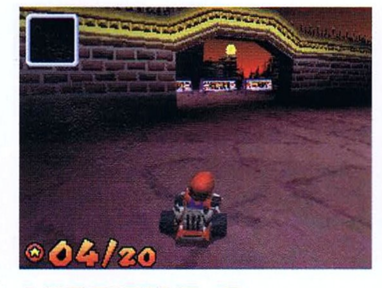
MISSION 3: 6

Grab the middle item box. Stop, pick a target and stay with it. It doesn't really matter what you pick. Drive forward a little, launch a shell after your target hops out, then back up to the item box and do it all over again.



MISSION 3: 7

You need to build up and use a corner turbo boost as you go around every single corner in this mission. On longer turns, you should make a point of corner turbo boosting twice. Keep all of your turns as sharp as possible.

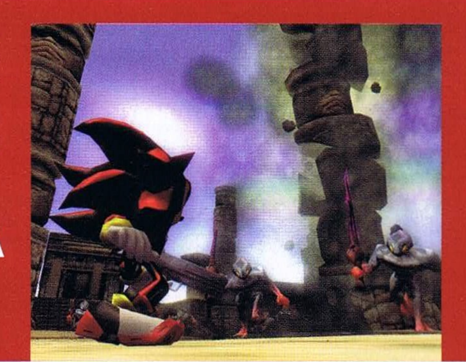


MISSION 3: 8

Use the braking turn technique from Mission 3: 3 to avoid the bananas, and use hopping turns to take corners as tightly as possible. Back up left through the gateway after collecting the fifth coin and turn left to find the next coin.

TIPS EXTRA

CONTINUED...



CENTRAL CITY THEME
Play this level once.

CHOSEN ONE
Defeat the slightly good side.

CIRCUS PARK THEME
Play this level once.

COSMIC FALL THEME
Play this level once.

CRYPTIC CASTLE THEME
Play this level once.

DEATH RUINS THEME
Play this level once.

DEVIL DOOM (I AM [FULL])
Complete the last story.

DEVIL DOOM BOSS THEME
Defeat Devil Doom.

MISSION 4







MISSION 4: 1
Take the first turn with a sharp corner turbo boost. Stay close to the inner wall but don't go inside the line of snowmen. Drive between the two left lines of snowmen and grab the item box on the hill. Try to get stars from every item box.

MISSION 4: 2
The crabs are slow, so getting the three-star rank in this mission is easy. You don't need to focus on getting stars out of boxes – any item that lets you hit crabs will do. If you get the triple shell item, just drive around and run into them.

MISSION 4: 3
All item boxes here are triple mushrooms. Use corner turbo boosts as frequently as possible to increase your speed, but be careful not to let yourself slide into oncoming traffic. If you grab every item box, you should get three stars easily.







MISSION 4: 4
All item boxes in this mission are triple mushrooms. Use corner turbo boosts frequently, but remember that you'll slide more in the sand than usual. Use mushrooms to boost through the rough sand and to launch off the hills.

MISSION 4: BOSS
If King Boo steals any coins from you, it automatically disqualifies you from the three-star ranking. The trick to getting it is to use corner turbo boosts to gather coins quickly and then throw yourself into the lava when King Boo gets too close.

MISSION 4: 5
Drive straight until you grab the eighth coin. Hold the brake to stop and then back up while holding right. Wait for the Thwomps to land and then accelerate forward. You should be able to grab the coins before the Thwomps land again.







MISSION 4: 6
Some of the item boxes in this mission are actually hazards, so only grab these safe item boxes that contain mushrooms: middle, second from left, far right, far left, far right, second from left, far right, second from right, middle.

MISSION 4: 7
Build a corner turbo boost after you pass the third gate. Drift through the fourth and fifth gates, aim for the next gate and release your boost. Pass the sixth and seventh gates, drift through the eighth and ninth, and then corner turbo boost.

MISSION 4: 8
Go right at the first turn and then do sharp corner turbo boosts at every turn after that. Be careful to avoid the puddles. The only bends you shouldn't boost through are the short, repeated S-bends, which you can just drive straight through.

DIABLON AND SONIC BOSS THEME
Defeat this boss.

DIGITAL CIRCUIT THEME
Play this level once.

EGG BREAKER BOSS THEME
Defeat this boss.

EGG DEALER THEME
Defeat Egg Dealer after going Neutral all the way.

ENDING
Defeat Devil Doom.

EVENT 1 THEME
Listen to this once in Story mode.

EVENT 2 THEME
Listen to this once in Story mode.

EVENT 3 THEME
Listen to this once in Story mode.

EVENT 4 THEME
Listen to this once in Story mode.

FINAL HAUNT THEME
Play this level once.

GLYPHIC CANNON THEME
Play this level once.

GUN FORTRESS THEME
Play this level once.



MISSION 5



MISSION 5: 1

Build corner turbo boosts on bends, but save your boosts for clearing the patches of flowers. Doing this makes it easy to get ahead of Chomp Chomp too. Be careful on the final corner because a too-sharp drift turn will send you into the wall.



MISSION 5: 2

The key to this mission lies in making sharp turns by letting go of the brake. Otherwise, just drive backwards, grabbing coins as they appear. You have to adjust your driving technique for the snowy terrain since it makes you slide more.



MISSION 5: 3

Veer left along the beach, following the line of items, and stop near the end. Positioned properly, item boxes will crash into you. The precise position you want is along the grey portion of the sand. Once you're positioned correctly, just sit there.



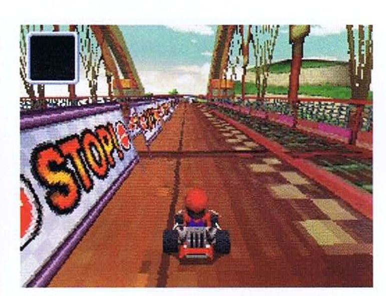
MISSION 5: 4

Corner turbo boost around corners whenever possible and hit every turbo panel you can. Avoid the first turbo jump, but then hit all of the others after that to reach the sixth gate. Be careful not to overshoot the ninth gate.



MISSION 5: BOSS

All item boxes yield bombs in this mission. You must beat Big Bob-omb with your first three attacks. Begin by attacking him with bombs from the item boxes behind you, and then get bombs from the boxes that Big Bob-omb summons himself.



MISSION 5: 5

All item boxes here contain mushrooms. Veer right to avoid the traffic. When you come out of the tunnel, mini turbo boost left onto the shortcut and use mushrooms to speed over the dirt. From there, just boost whenever you can.



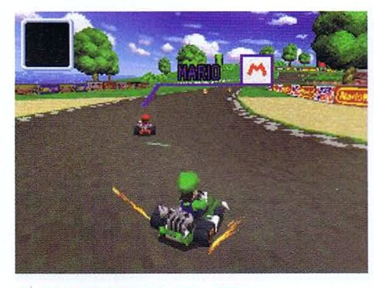
MISSION 5: 6

Braking turns are the order of the day here as this mission is all about precision. Line up parallel with the icing once you've gone around the cake topping and that'll set you up for a jump that grabs a long line of coins.



MISSION 5: 7

Veer left and then drift through the first two gates while building a mini turbo boost. Use it to pass the third gate. From there, the mission is simply a matter of making tight hopping right turns and hitting the remaining gates.



MISSION 5: 8

The quality of your items can determine whether or not you get three-star rank in this mission. You want as many stars as possible so use corner turbo boosts whenever you can, and use items to quickly pass over the sandy areas.

TIPS EXTRA

CONTINUED...

HEAVY DOG/BLUE FALCON REMIXED BOSS THEME
Defeat these bosses.

IRON JUNGLE THEME
Play this level once.

LAVA SHELTER THEME
Play this level once.

LETHAL HIGHWAY THEME
Play this level once.

LOST IMPACT THEME
Play this level once.

MAD MATRIX THEME
Play this level once.

NEVER TURN BACK
Complete the last story.

PRISON ISLAND THEME
Play this level once.

SKY TROOPS THEME
Play this level once.

SPACE GADGET THEME
Play this level once.

THE ARK THEME
Play this level once.

THE DOOM THEME
Play this level once.

MISSION 6



MISSION 6: 1

Make sure you keep driving backwards along the rotating bridge. You have to drive in the direction opposite the bridge's rotation if you want to stay on course. Don't turn too sharply because this will cost you valuable seconds.



MISSION 6: 2

If you get stars from the item boxes, use them immediately. Take out all the Rocky Wrenches as you can without turning your kart – backing up and turning around too frequently will eat up too much of your time.



MISSION 6: 3

This track features a lot of dirt terrain, which makes your drift turns wider than usual. Vary corner turbo boosts with braking turns in the muddy sections. Remember that the mud will make you slide much further than dirt will.



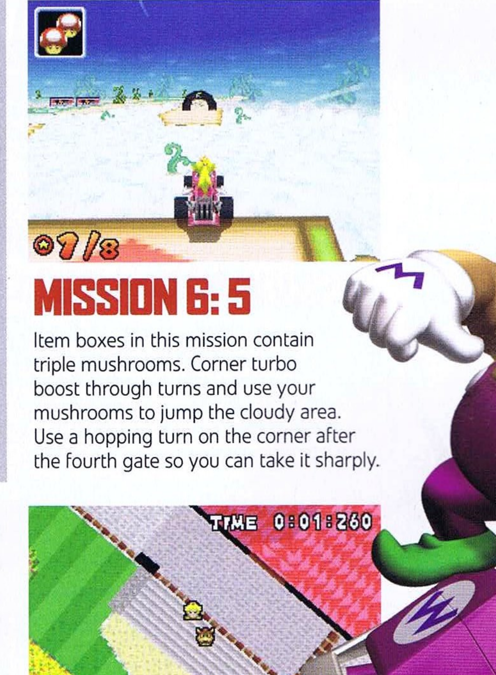
MISSION 6: 4

The item boxes seem to be moving randomly, but there's a pattern. Practise the course a few times and you'll be able to see just how it works. You can cut your time down with controlled corner turbo boosts once you understand the pattern.



MISSION 6: BOSS

Back up and grab the triple mushroom item box that's coming up behind you. Aim for Chief Chilly and use a mushroom. You should be able to bump him into the water with one shot. The next two times, trick him into charging at you.



MISSION 6: 5

Item boxes in this mission contain triple mushrooms. Corner turbo boost through turns and use your mushrooms to jump the cloudy area. Use a hopping turn on the corner after the fourth gate so you can take it sharply.



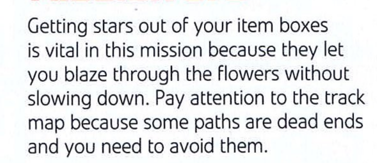
MISSION 6: 6

The trick to this mission is simple, but it's difficult to pull off. You need to corner turbo boost at every corner to make the time requirement. Remember that you can't start building up a boost until you start sliding in a given direction.



MISSION 6: 7

Veer left and go down the line of coins to the opposite side. Turn around and drive down the line behind you. Keep doing this back and forth, but be careful – the clock hands are turning all the time and you'll drop coins if you get hit.



MISSION 6: 8

Getting stars out of your item boxes is vital in this mission because they let you blaze through the flowers without slowing down. Pay attention to the track map because some paths are dead ends and you need to avoid them.

THE FINAL WAY
Play this level once.

WAKING UP
Complete the game after clearing Lava Shelter (Neutral story).

WESTOPOLIS THEME
Play this level once.

SUPER MARIO STRIKERS
Gamecube

UNLOCKABLE STADIUMS

BOWSER STADIUM
Finish in the top three in the Bowser Cup.

CRATER FIELD
Finish in the top three in the Flower Cup.

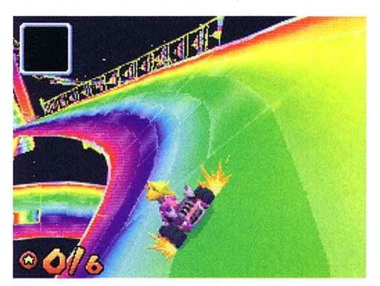
KONGA COLISEUM
Finish in the top three in the Mushroom Cup.

THE BATTLE DOME
Finish in the top three in the Star Cup.

CUSTOM POWER-UPS

ACCELERATOR
Win the Gold Sniper Trophy.

MISSION 7



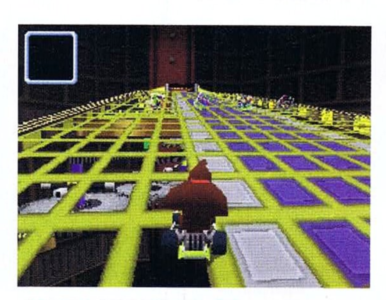
MISSION 7: 1

Hit the turbo ramps, then corner turbo boost on the spiral ramp. You'll need to hit the turbo ramps along the ramp so make sure you're properly lined up. Use your boost once you level out, hit the turbo ramp and go through the loop.



MISSION 7: 2

Veer right around the 'do not pass' signs and then left towards the item boxes. Try to get a star out of every item box you run across. Don't drive onto the rotating bridge. Instead, use a star or mushroom to head off the platform on the left.



MISSION 7: 3

All the item boxes here contain triple mushrooms. At the first right turn, hit the two turbo panels while drifting and then release your corner turbo boost. Use mushrooms as you head down hills and turn carefully in the clock area.



MISSION 7: 4

This mission just involves grabbing shells from the item boxes and lobbing them at Goombas. Remember that when you have the triple shell item orbiting around you, the next item box you grab will usually be a single shell.



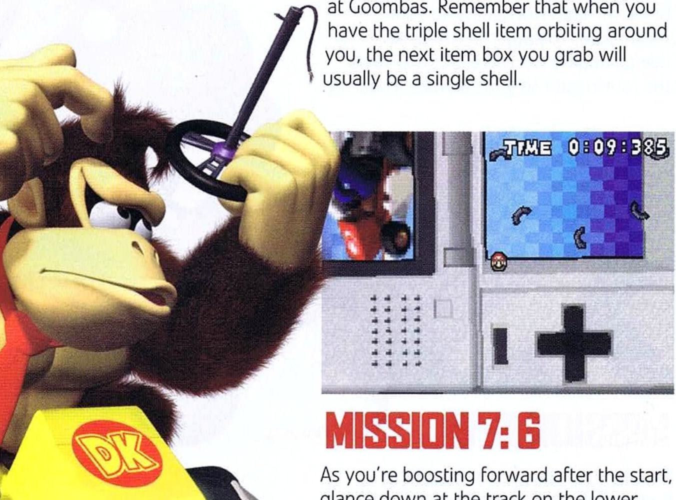
MISSION 7: BOSS

Mushrooms and stars appear in alternating item boxes in this mission. To beat Wiggler, make sure you grab every item and use it immediately to race to the next box. Ram the trucks when you're using the star to uncover mushrooms.



MISSION 7: 5

You can't make any mistakes on this mission, so you'll probably have to do it several times to memorise the layout. Use corner turbo boosts on turns, but don't hesitate to brake when collecting the coins around the fire wheels.



MISSION 7: 6

As you're boosting forward after the start, glance down at the track on the lower DS screen. A streak of light should be approaching you, so begin drifting to the right when it hits you. From there, slide through each of the gates in order.



MISSION 7: 7

On this reverse-driving mission, you have to make careful turns while collecting coins. After collecting the first coin, follow the path by quickly tapping the gas instead of holding it down – this lets you corner more sharply. Avoid the burners.



MISSION 7: 8

This is another banana-dodging mission, so remember the tricks from the last one. This time, you can corner turbo boost normally through the corners and use lots of mushroom boosts. You'll have to line up your boosts before you use them.

TIPS EXTRA

CONTINUED...

EXPLOSIVES
Win the Gold Super Striker Trophy.

FREEZING
Win the Gold Tactician Trophy.

GIANT
Win the Gold Paramedic Trophy.

SHELLS
Win the Gold Veteran Trophy.

FIELD TILT
Win the Super Flower Cup.

INFINITE POWER-UPS
Win the Super Star Cup.

PERFECT STRIKE
Win the Bowser Cup.

WEAK GOALIES
Win the Super Bowser Cup.

SUPER TEAM
Win the Bowser Cup.

CALL OF DUTY 2: BIG RED ONE

Gamecube

UNLOCK ALL LEVELS
On the Level Selection screen, hold down the L and R shoulder buttons and enter Up, Up, Down, Down, Left, Left, Right, Right, X, Right, X, Right, X.



Mobile Games
01
MEDIEVAL COMBAT
Gamespot 'very impressive'
play 49
Medieval Combat: Age of Glory plunges you into the heart of fantastical medieval mythology. Demons or humans, it is up to you to choose which of the five initial combatants you will side with.
02
2005 REAL FOOTBALL
'Best Mobile Game ever'
play 43
2005 Real Football puts you at the helm of one of 32 national teams or one of 16 prestigious clubs in 5 varied game modes (Quickplay, Exhibition, Cup, League and Training). Thanks to the FIFPRO license, the game also features real-life players.
03
MIDNIGHT POOL
Gamespot 9.2/10
play 39
Midnight Pool™ brings you into the competitive universe of a genuine American pool hall. You will face 8 original players, none of whom are ever at a loss for words! Choose from 3 available characters, then unlock the others in Tournament mode.
04
BROTHERS IN ARMS
IGN 9.5/10 Great Game!
play 51
June 1944: The Allies land on the beaches of Normandy to liberate the continent...You'll have to show your brothers in arms how to face the terrible ordeals that await you so that they will follow you on the road to liberty...
05
SPLINTER CELL CHAOS THEORY
Gamespot 8.4/10
play 41
This time, Sam Fisher has to do his best to prevent a potentially explosive new World War in the Pacific. Using Stealth moves, you can hide even closer to your enemies, grab guards to cut their throats and kill them even more silently.
06
ASPHALT URBAN GT2
Gamespot 9/10. 'Superb'
play 53
You are taken out on 8 tracks inspired by genuine places. Each track is part of a specific graphic universe and includes different tunnels and elevations that enable you to perform impressive jumps, among other things ...
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UFC Veteran
ATTACK3
MICHAEL WONG
Tai Chi Combat
MARTIAL ARTS TRAINING
ATTACK5
NEIL ADAMS MBE
Olympian
Some of the techniques shown: How to defend yourself and attack when the fight goes to the ground. Brazilian Jiu Jitsu World Champion shows you how its all done.
Cage Rage Mixed Martial Arts
Some of the techniques shown:
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Defence Against Jab & Rear Hook
Defense Against A Grab
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Win every battle and complete…

BATTALION WARS



WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

A sublime action strategy game on Gamecube, Battalion Wars owes a lot to Advance Wars, yet it offers a new and unique experience. Taking part in vastly varied missions, you have to control your army in this surprising deep but intuitive game that offers a brilliant mix of strategy thrills and tactical depth.

BEHIND ENEMY LINES



Enemies will always go after a unit you control first.

Pick up Bravo Company and head to your first destination, eliminating the spy on route. You'll have to take out a pair of Riflemen, which is no big deal. When you reach the next clearing, you'll find that the enemy has dug in behind cover. Get your grunts to attack, then flank the enemies here and take them out.

Use the MG Nest to wipe out the troops on the rope bridge and then cross it.

You'll get into a couple of small firefights as you head towards an entrenched position. Don't just charge at the enemy here because you're about to get some air support and reinforcements. Let them arrive before you take out the enemy, and then shoot the barrels to help thin out the remaining enemy forces.

When you reach your next gold star, you'll have the chance to take control of a tank. Charge boldly forward, wiping out the infantry, until you get to the next bridge. The mounted machine guns pose no threat to your tank, so put your troops in Sentry mode and destroy the towers. Once they're taken care of, fall back and allow your Riflemen to protect you from the bazooka-wielding soldiers that'll be sent after you. Destroy the labelled items to win this mission.



ASSAULT ON WINDBREAK RIDGE

Flank the first fortified position and dispose of the troops. Quickly move across the river with your Riflemen in tow to meet up with a band of bazooka troops, then transfer control into one of them to dispose of the heavy recon vehicles coming your way.



At close range, circle an enemy tank and fire at it repeatedly.

Once you reach Windbreak Ridge proper, drop your two most injured Riflemen into the MG Nests at the front of the base and set up your Bazooka Veterans as sentries at the base's rear. You'll have to contend with four attack waves – the first and third are infantry at the base's front, while the second is comprised of heavy recon vehicles. The fourth wave will be dropped directly into the centre of your base, but your MG Nests will take most of these troops out before you know it.

A fifth wave, which involves a pair of tanks, will roll up on your rear flank from the river crossing. Fortunately, you'll get a tank of your own to help you deal with them. Bring your Bazooka Veterans along for the ride and destroy the tanks to end this mission.



Mounted guns give you high firepower but leave you vulnerable.

OPERATION POW

Send in your Bazooka Veterans to disable the tank, and your Riflemen to dispose of the gunners on either side of the gate. Once you're inside, blow up the ammo dump to free the Scouts, then hop into the light recon vehicle. This thing steers like it's made out of ice, so you need to be careful as you race for the finish line.

WHAT WE SAID

Variations in maps, objectives and challenges give away just how much effort has gone into the design of each and every mission. When you're presented with something that's such an accomplished labour of love, it's difficult not to recommend it. It's brilliant fun and an absolute blast from start to finish. Without doubt the best Gamecube action strategy game.



TIPS EXTRA

THE TIPS YOU NEED FOR THE GAMES YOU'RE PLAYING...

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE TWO THRONES

Gamecube

SWORD CODES
Pause the game and enter Left, Left, Right, Right, X, Y, Y, X, Up, Down.

BABY TOY OF DEATH
Pause the game and enter Up, Up, Down, Down, Left, Right, Left, Right, X, Y, X, Y.

CHAINSAW
After completing the game on Normal, enter Right, Left, Right, Left, Down, Down, Up, Up, X, Y, X, X, Y, Y.



Hard rights are likely to make recon vehicles fishtail, so make sure you turn gently.



Vehicles are mostly immune to small-arms fire, so don't worry about it.

When you reach the fork in the road, go right – there's heavy armour on the left. Either way, you'll wind up evading or running over a lot of scattered troops right up until you hit a major enemy drop zone. Just keep your speed up and head straight through, trusting your rear gunner to eliminate some of the pursuit.

While you're slaloming down the mountainside, look ahead and line yourself up with the earth ramp. Head straight through the gate, between the two gun towers, and take a hard left into the tunnel. Another hard right out of the rear gate will put you into the forest maze – work your way through to reach the silver star. You can use the hill near the Tundrans' roadblock to ramp over their defences, leaving you with a straight shot at your own camp.

Once there, leap into the tank and put down the Riflemen standing in your way. When the Bazooka Veterans show up, use your Riflemen to defend the tank, then switch over to your new Missile Veteran and put an end to the enemy helicopter.

PLAN OF ATTACK

Take a squad of Riflemen and Bazooka Veterans to the right of your starting position to free the Flame Veterans. These troops work a treat against enemy infantry.

Work your way around the west side of the map, dismantling the barricades with your infantry. The high concentration of Bazooka Veterans makes it difficult to use tanks, so opt for Riflemen instead. If Flame Veterans show up, use your Recon unit or Riflemen to take them out from a safe distance.

Capture the Light Tank from the peak near Castle Potemkin and then use your infantry to take out the Bazooka Veterans at Potemkin's southern entrance. Once they've been dealt with, pull your infantry back and use your tanks to clean up the area around the capture point. When it's relatively clear, dispatch your infantry to get the flag.



Heavy tanks' gun turrets sometimes protect you against Bazooka Veterans.



Be sure to guard your infantry while they're raising a new flag.

Using a tank to blow up Riflemen doesn't usually work very well.

TITANS OF TUNDRA

It's important to keep a constant eye on where the enemy tanks are during this mission because several of them are on patrol, where they can casually annihilate a big chunk of your infantry if they catch you napping.

Wait a few seconds and then use your Recon unit to draw the first heavy tank back towards your forces, where you can annihilate it. Use a Flame Veteran to sweep the Bazooka Veterans off the hill in front of you, then station a couple of Missile Veterans there.

Knock the gunships out of the sky and use one or two of your tanks to gang up on and eliminate the enemy's Heavy Tanks one at a time. Once you've swept and cleared your side of the river, moving from one fortified position to the next, move your forces up and cross the bridge.



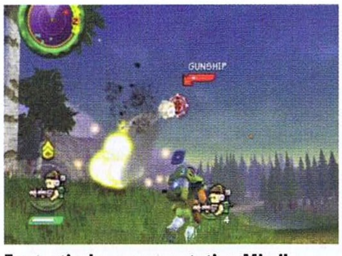
TELEPHONE OF SORROW
Pause the game and press Up, Down, Up, Down, Left, Right, Left, Right, X, Y, X and Y.

KING KONG
Gamecube

CHEAT MENU
At the main menu, hold down L and R and press Down, X, Up, Y, Down, Down, Up, Up. Release L and R and you'll see a new Cheat option. Now you can enter these passwords.

ALL BONUSES COMPLETE
KKmuseum.

FULL AMMO
KK 999 mun.



For tactical purposes, station Missile Veterans on high ground when you can.

Lead Riflemen and Flame Veterans on a commando mission to dispose of the Riflemen and Bazooka Veterans by the enemy's final stronghold. Send at least one Missile Veteran to dispose of the enemy gunship in the area.

STRIKING DISTANCE

This is going to be bloody. Head downhill to collect a few extra troops and dispatch some Flame Veterans. When you reach the river, you'll acquire Artillery vehicles, but you'll also wind up with some serious problems. Set up your Missile and Bazooka Veterans on your right flank, or you'll get whupped by the gunships and tanks that'll arrive there shortly. At the same time, keep your Riflemen stationed on your left flank so they can nail the Bazooka Veterans who'll ford the river.

Keep Missile Veterans under your control to knock down the gunships, and keep up your artillery bombardment until the towers and tanks around the second capture point have been neutralised. At that point, send Assault Troops and a single Artillery Unit to get rid of the resistance surrounding the first capture point. The Artillery Unit's job is to take out the MG Towers. Once you've done as much as you can from here, advance across the bridge to the west and keep going towards the radar stations. Use your artillery to destroy the tanks and gun nests before your infantry gets anywhere near them.



In a pinch, sustained fire from Assault Veterans can damage buildings.



Artillery comes into its own against immobile structures.

BEACHHEAD

Drive to Fort Omaha as soon as you can, then run out onto the beach and use an Assault Trooper's firepower to help take out the first soldiers.



One Assault or Bazooka Trooper in an open area can mop up a couple of tanks.

Between attack waves, be sure to put a Rifleman into each of the machine-gun bunkers on the beach.

When the next wave arrives, pull back inside the fort's walls and rely on the machine-gun bunkers to whittle down the enemies before they can get there. Your only objective is to keep foot soldiers from reaching the flagpole, and that's easy enough – one Assault Trooper in the right place can cut them down in their tracks.

However, once your Anti-Air vehicle arrives, things will start to get just a little bit harder. Not only will several fresh waves of infantry arrive, but you'll also need to dismantle the



In Striking Distance, watch out for the Veterans who'll swim across the river. If you spot them, you should be able to take them out with relative ease.

TIPS EXTRA CONTINUED...

MACHINE GUN
KKcapone.

REVOLVER
KKtigun.

SHOTGUN
KKsh0tgun.

SNIPER RIFLE
KKsn1per.

INFINITE SPEARS
lance 1nf.

INVINCIBILITY
8wonder.

LEVEL SELECT
KKst0ry.

ONE HIT KILLS
GrosBras.

NEED FOR SPEED MOST WANTED
Gamecube

UNLOCK BURGER KING CHALLENGE IN CHALLENGE SERIES
At the 'Press Start' screen, enter Up, Down, Up, Down, Left, Right, Left, Right.

BATTALION WARS

Win every battle and complete the game



Xylvanian troops use acid clouds instead of flame because it covers a wider area.



On Invasion Force, the more tanks you get around the comms tower, the better.



Use ground units to take out the enemy air defences, and vice versa.



Mortar Veterans take some practice to use, but they're very powerful.



When in doubt, just throw everyone into a group and open fire.



Protect an Anti-Air unit and it'll knock down enemy gunships with ease.

incoming bombers before this mission is over. Take control of the Anti-Air unit and trust your troops inside the base to take care of business. You now need to knock the bombers down as fast as they arrive.

INVASION FORCE

Drive forward with a few Riflemen and Flame troops to clear out the infantry in the area, then destroy the artillery guns. Once Vlad announces the arrival of a pair of gunships, direct transfer to your Anti-Air tanks and bring them in to obliterate the gunships from across the bridge.

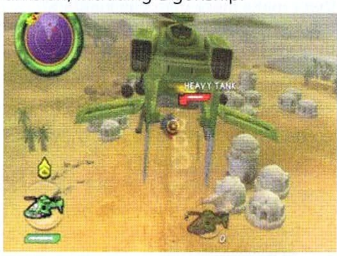
With that clear, take both tanks, an AA unit and your Flame Vets north to secure the northern bridges. Be sure to take control of the AA unit once the gunships arrive. Leave most of your forces in place near the southern bridge so they can deal with the enemy reinforcements that will appear.

Transfer back and forth a couple of times to make sure the infantry and gunships don't dispatch the Tundran forces on either bridge and then retreat to the comms station. It's important to have both Anti-Air Batteries intact at this point, because having them around will allow you to shoot down both the enemy gunships and transport helicopters. The less air cover the enemy has, the easier it'll be to run out the clock.

Once that's done, head for the gold star as quickly as possible. Don't hang back here – just drive straight for the star and defend the Tundran infantry there, trusting your rearguard to get rid of any enemy units you encounter on the way.

GUNSHIPS OF THE DESERT

Blow up as many gunships as you can at the start of the mission, then switch to the recon vehicle and head south fast. You'll meet up with a mechanised division, including a gunship.



It's essential to have air superiority so take out the enemy gunships.

Use that gunship to take out the rocket and minigun troops in the area, then rendezvous with the infantry division nearby. A short distance ahead, you'll find a pair of Anti-Aircraft Batteries, so switch from the gunship to your tanks to take them out. Once you've done that, continue using your gunship to run riot on the enemy. You should be able to deal with most of the incidental opposition you'll face in the area this way.

Once they've been softened up, launch a full-scale assault on the area that contains the capture points. Use your gunship to knock out the machine-gun bunkers outside its walls, then send a single Missile Vet up to the gate to cautiously knock as many gunships as possible out of the sky. Mount a couple of small raids to thin out the opposition and then send in your infantry to make the captures.



You'd think they'd notice someone blowing up their helicopters…

BLACK GOLD

Use your gunships to clear the way for a ground squadron of Mortar Veterans and Riflemen – the gunships take out the heavy armour, while your infantry troops destroy the searchlights. Once all five lights are gone, man one of the bombers – and only one, because bringing the second one along as an escort will just waste it – and bomb the extraction towers. Easy!



Be careful when you're flying a bomber because they handle like buses.

XDA

Let your grunts take care of the residual force on the beach while you transfer over to a tank and demolish the artillery and MG Towers. That'll secure your beachhead. While you're at it, that one tank you've been using is more than enough to eliminate the helipad garrison, which is defended entirely by people wielding acid gas, and some MG Towers. There's not much they can do against a tank.

This is where the hard part starts. Lingering around the helipad is a



When you need to destroy the enemy searchlights in the Black Gold mission, send in your infantry – just a few mortar rounds should be enough to take them all out.

UNLOCK CASTROL SYNTEC VERSION OF THE FORD GT
At the 'Press Start' screen, enter Left, Right, Left, Right, Up, Down, Up, Down.

UNLOCK ALL LOTS
X, B, Left, X, Up and X.

MARIO PARTY 7

Gamecube

UNLOCK BOWSER'S ENCHANTED INFERNO BOARD
Beat all of the boards in Solo mode.

MAGIC LAMP
Complete the Normal course in King of the River mode.

SOUVENIR EASTER EGGS
When viewing souvenirs, say the word highlighted in green in the description into the mic to make something happen.

CHOP CHOP HELICOPTER
Play the Deluxe Cruise until you have 1,000 Cruise Mileage Points and then purchase in the Duty Free Shop.

FREE PLAY SUB
Play every type of game in the Minigame Cruise and purchase in the Duty Free shop for 1,000 Cruise Mileage Points.

MIRACLE TREASURE CHEST
Complete the Easy course in King of the River mode.

happily over-commit and come after your perimeter en masse. Your Assault Veteran will have a straight shot at freeing the fighter pilots being held prisoner in the enemy's main headquarters.

Once they're in the air, take out the gunships before squaring off against the vicious Strato Destroyer. Note that it's most vulnerable to attacks from the rear.

HERMAN'S HEROES

Send out a few Flame Veterans to clear the road, then go uphill to the eastern encampment. Use a squad of Mortar Veterans to take out the Watchtower and the Minigun Vets from behind their own wall, then free the Missile Veterans to help deal with the inbound gunships. The rest of this scenario is mostly a



Mortar Veterans can get creative with their shells in this mission.

Really, it's almost too easy sometimes.

commando mission for a single Mortar Veteran. Sneak up on the central camp and obliterate its watchtowers and Heavy Recon units using grenades, then call in backup to raise the flagpole. Free some Bazooka Vets, then leave everyone there while you sneak around to the overlook above the third campsite with your Mortar Vet.

From here, you can take out one of the watchtowers, lure most of the tanks out after you and generally wreak havoc before you send your main force into the final campsite. With the powerful Solar Veterans on your side, blasting your way back to your extraction point will be easy.

good way to get a near-constant flood of soldiers dropped on you from both the north and west. Hole up on the hilltop where the captive Missile Veterans are being kept, then establish a perimeter. Now get ready because all of the local infantry will come after you.

Dispatch a lone Assault Veteran downhill. The Kaiser's forces will



Well, this looks unpleasantly familiar.

CALL SIGN EAGLE

This mission is pure seek and destroy. Basically, if your commanders ask you to destroy something, you just have to go out and blow it up. As such, there's not much to this one apart from practice and pure speed.

You should try to conserve your Strato Destroyer until the endgame, when you'll have to mix it up with a couple of enemy fighters, bombers and Strato Destroyers. Also, try to make



The moment this mission starts, open up that throttle!



Don't make more than one bombing run against the enemy artillery because they've got cover to hide behind here.

sure that you have enough of a fighter escort left by the end so that they can help you out if necessary.

THE GUNS OF TIKI BAY

Run straight forward, dispatching any troops that get in your way, and take on the Minigun Veteran, and then the Ack-Acks. You need to have destroyed them before the Battlestation arrives so you can use your new gunship to take it out of the picture.

Once that's done, move your infantry forward, keeping your gunship in reserve back near your starting point. Keep pushing forward so you can rendezvous with your reinforcements – which include an Anti-Air unit – on the central island. Once they're safe, take control of the Anti-Air unit and use it to shoot down the Battlestation's fighter cover.

Now you can engage it relatively safely with your gunships, but make sure your infantry has made the scene by then. That way, they can engage the enemy's Ack-Ack units and make sure your gunships have some space to work with.

BATTLE OF THE CORAL ATOLLS

Run a quick circuit around the island with your bomber, nailing tanks and



Gunships are about the only other unit that has a chance against a Battlestation.



Now you've got a weak spot, so make sure you don't let enemies get behind you!

TIPS EXTRA CONTINUED...

MSS SEA STAR SOUVENIR
Play every board in Party Mode once, then buy it for 1,000 Cruise Mileage.

POWER STAR STATUE
Complete the Hard course in King of the River mode.

HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE
Gamecube

20 HOUSE POINTS
Complete Vampires Set.

20 HOUSE POINTS
Complete Giants set.

20 HOUSE POINTS
Complete Goblins set.

EXTRA ENDURANCE FOR HARRY
Complete Wizards set.

EXTRA ENDURANCE FOR HARRY
Complete Quidditch set.

ground troops, to flush a gunship out of reserve. Once it shows up, double back to your starting position and simply let your Missile Veterans take care of business.

Once your starting island is relatively clear, use your bomber to dismantle



Your Battlestation is absolutely essential for success in this mission.



Heavy tanks can't really damage a Battlestation much, although the hits tend to add up over time.



When Battlestations clash, move infantry away and start looking for cover.

the artillery units on the northwestern island. You'll need to send your infantry to swim across the channel, then kill everyone around the capture point and take it. Run across the rope bridge to the central island and free the Solar Veterans being held captive there.

Bring your own Battlestation into play now. Drive it onto the southeastern island and just don't stop, tearing through tanks and enemy Battlestations alike. Use your Missile Veterans as an escort to help defend your Battlestation from the inevitable encounters with gunships, but try to hold your infantry back until you need them to activate the capture point.

BRIDGES ON THE RIVER STYX

Take control of a tank and head down the bridge, taking out two MG Nests and two MG Towers as you go. Once you hit the middle of the bridge, stop and send Assault Veterans ahead to destroy the Rocket Vets at the other end. Once they're done, move your tank forward once more to destroy the MG Towers on either side of the first capture point.

When that's captured, climb back into your tank and drive towards the second capture point with all due haste, running over anything in your way. Let your Riflemen and Assault Veterans take care of the ground troops while you obliterate the MG Towers on the ground and on the mountains nearby. Capture the flag here and move on.

There are Rocket Veterans and two more MG Towers waiting on the other end of the bridge. Send your surviving Assault Veterans across first to make short work of the troops, then bulldoze the towers with your least damaged tank. Once you've captured the last flag, you've got a final destination to reach. Wipe up the Rocket Veterans and artillery at the other end of the blocked bridge, and knock the bombers out of the sky if you haven't done so already. Now set up most of your force as sentries outside the clearing that contains the final gold star.

It is, of course, a trap, and going there will trigger the appearance of several tanks and artillery batteries. Destroy them and then head out via the valley to end this mission.

ROAD TO XYLVANIA

This is long, but not particularly difficult. It's mostly a commando mission for your Battlestation, with occasional covering fire required from a squadron of Missile Veterans. Just make sure you keep driving down the road and that you get in the first strike against artillery units or mounted guns. Pillboxes can be dangerous to your Battlestation, but your Assault Veterans will eat them for lunch so let those units take care of them.



The Battlestation's main cannon is powerful but must be manually aimed.



Keep a full complement of Missile Veterans to defend your Battlestation.

TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN SOLDIERS

Station an Anti-Air unit to take out the four gunships that'll suddenly fly in, and then press forward with your tanks. You'll find that the enemy tanks' shots have sped up dramatically, so you'll need to cut a wider circle as you dodge their fire. Destroy the two tanks here, then send a few Flame Veterans uphill to free the Solars. At the same time, yet more gunships will arrive, but hopefully your Anti-Air units will take care of them without needing to be prompted. Alternate between your Flame Veterans and Anti-Air units as you press forward through the trees.

Your next goal is to shatter all the statues so you can open fire on the obelisk – this is all going to get very fast and hectic. Your best bet may be to split your forces and let your AI tanks rain down death from above while you simply run around in the background and try not to die. Once the statues have all been destroyed, focus your fire on the obelisk.

SIEGE OF THE VLAGSTAG

Nova's gunships are the key to winning *Battalion Wars* – if they survive, you do. If they don't, you don't.

Keep your mortar troops in reserve as you drive towards the capture points. While there's a lot of opposition in this area, the gunships will make life a lot easier. Just drive forward, destroying everything in your path, and capture the first flag.

The enemy Battlestations are going to be a problem for you here, especially since you have no air units to bring them down. The key to this mission is to bring your mortar troops in to dispatch the enemy's Anti-Air units by lobbing shells at them from a safe distance. Once all of the Anti-Air units have been destroyed, Nova's gunships can take out the Battlestations with relative ease, giving you a clear shot at the final capture point.

Once you reach that, you've completed the game. Congratulations!

EXTRA ENDURANCE FOR HERMIONE
Complete Witches set.

EXTRA ENDURANCE FOR HERMIONE
Complete Hags set.

EXTRA ENDURANCE FOR RON
Complete Dragons set.

EXTRA ENDURANCE FOR RON
Complete Classical Beasts set.

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THE FAMILY TREE

The sordid history of today's biggest games.

Back to the Future

With Mario and Luigi time paradoxing themselves silly in their latest romp, we present a round-up of gaming's clock-fiddling classics…



△ Never released in the UK, *Chrono Trigger* was so good, it still has legions of die-hard fans.

△ You could leap through time and, erm, clobber people in Rare's *Time Lord*.

TIME LORD (NES, 1989)
An unholy alliance between MB Games and Rare, *Time Lord* married *Final Fight*-esque bloke-bashing to four different time periods. Useful knowledge: aliens will destroy the Earth on January 1st, 3000. Admire their punctuality.

STARTROPICS 2: ZODA'S REVENGE (NES, 1994)
Upsettingly poor sequel to a much-loved Nintendo-developed RPG, with a time-hopping hero who meets Leonardo da Vinci on his temporal travels and is tasked with making Mona Lisa smile. Mention this game to Nintendo and they'll just stare until you leave.

CHRONO TRIGGER (SUPER NINTENDO, 1995)
Another one of those SNES games that Europe could only see with a really strong telescope pointed towards the US or Japan, *Chrono Trigger* would get high praise from Johnny Vegas or Jimmy Carr if Channel 4 ever did a Top 100 Videogames show on a Friday night. It's one of the Bestest Games Ever – a Square RPG that wraps time around its finger like moist chewing gum.

Like *Ocarina of Time*, the initial kick comes from the first trip through time: seeing your homeworld and its bright Millennial Fair transformed into the dystopian nightmare from 400 years before. From there, the game yo-yos between seven different time periods. There were 13 possible endings, depending on your actions. We won't spoil them, but none of them involved fixing things to win the future lottery.

Chrono Trigger also set the stage for some familiar Squaresoft personality traits – the Active Battle Time system that meant enemies wouldn't bother tapping their feet and whistling while you made your move, and the 'silent hero' who refused to utter a sound, even when slapped by a giant flea.

The game has dedicated fans coming out of its ears: there have been at least two fan attempts to remake the game (see page 64), fan novels, music, an online encyclopedia and poetry.

Square Enix has had the name '*Chrono Brake*' copyrighted in Japan for some time, so *Chrono Trigger* fans wake each morning with a hopeful tickle in their tummy about a sequel. Short of whisking forward in time, though, you won't be seeing it for a while.

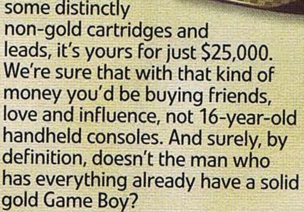
TIME TRAX (SUPER NINTENDO, 1994)
"His name is Darien Lambert, and this is his story." A story of running to the right and jumping over platforms – well worth telling, that is.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE OCARINA OF TIME (N64, 1998)
A masterclass that left N64 gamers giddy when Link was catapulted seven years forward to a Ganandorf-ruined future, and rode time like a crazy horse in order to give Hyrule its happiness back. Who needs a time machine when you've got a time-travelling church?

Gaming Family Trees, A Definitive Guide 1013

RETRO NEWS

News rounded up from the wild world of retrogaming.

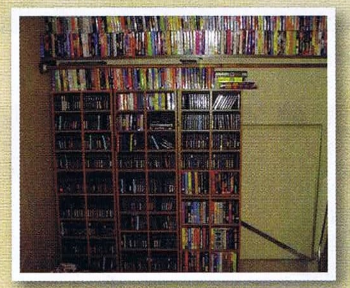


GOLD BOY

What do you get the man who has everything? The answer, according to Swiss Supply (www.swisssupply.com/nintendo.php), is a solid gold Game Boy. Made of 18-karat yellow gold and packaged with some distinctly non-gold cartridges and leads, it's yours for just $25,000. We're sure that with that kind of money you'd be buying friends, love and influence, not 16-year-old handheld consoles. And surely, by definition, doesn't the man who has everything already have a solid gold Game Boy?

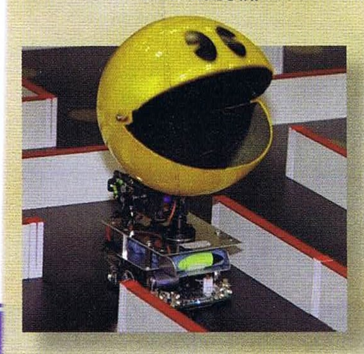
EBAY MADNESS

A 781-cart collection of every NES game ever manufactured, plus enough accessories to throw some kind of plastic party – *that's* what you give the man who has everything. Wrapping it is the problem. The eBay seller who's flogging this little lot on eBay calls it "the largest NES collection ever sold together on eBay", and at the time of writing, the bids were up to $7,099.99 (about £4,000). Which, bizarrely, means the reserve price hasn't been met. Perhaps there's an 18-karat Game Boy hidden in there somewhere.



ROBO PAC

You expect to see some odd things at Tokyo's International Robot Exhibition, but perhaps not something quite so odd as a working metal and silicon model of *Pac Man* (with the ghosts disappointingly restricted to the maze edges). An Akiharabanews.com reporter called it "one of the funniest things I saw at the IREX", a sentiment that's clearly echoed in the serious looks on the faces of the Japanese businessman standing around in their serious suits. They should have put the 'wakka wakka' noise in.



NET TENDO

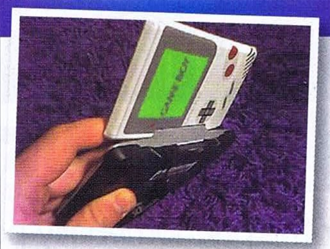
RAPPED UP



Now that anyone can store videos on Google (video.google.com), retro magic is being uploaded for people to gawp at on a daily basis. The latest is a Japanese ad for 1991's *The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past*, with some girl and a troupe of likely-looking characters dancing their lungs out to what sounds like the local equivalent of Vanilla Ice. Even an animatronic Ganon isn't enough to stop them. We always put *Zelda*'s success down to programming genius, but now we know it was a girl dressed as Link dancing on the *Mortal Kombat* movie set.

■ **http://video.google.com/videosearch?q=zelda+snes+commercial**

GAME BOY DS



When we're bored at work, we play with the stapler or weep silently into our mug of weak tea. When Chris Thompson was bored at work, he transformed his Nintendo DS into a retro work of art, using vinyl-printing techniques to recreate the look of our favourite green-and-grey-screened box of blurry daylight-only gaming, the classic Game Boy. "I wish I had taken better pictures now," said Chris as his handiwork pinged around the internet and attracted the impressed nods of thousands. We're guessing he's referring to the inclusion of the blue 'pasta rug'.

■ **www.livejournal.com/community/nintendo_ds/580556.html**

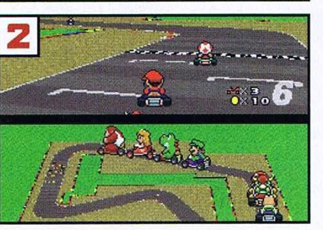
FIVE Things

Once revolutionary, these are the top forgotten special effects



1 PARALLAX

This was an optical illusion that shifted background layers at different speeds, giving the impression of distance for people paying attention. Now only seen when you look out of a train window in real life, which isn't as impressive.



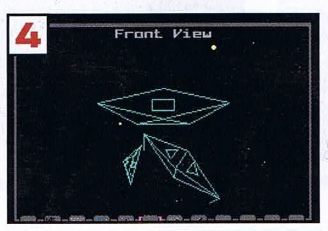
2 MODE 7

Hyped-up SNES effect that twisted 2D shapes along 3D axes, giving you perspective racetracks – and developer logos flipping and twisting like a magician's hands on title screens. Impressive if you thought the Earth was flat.



3 SCALING

Magnifying 2D shapes to give the impression of decreasing distance, although '90s consoles couldn't smooth things off, and so a distant tree would gradually become a screen-filling gigantic Lego monster that made kids cry.



4 WIREFRAME

This is what 3D looks like if someone forgets to do the colouring in, but it was all that early consoles could manage. It looks pretty unrealistic now, but just wait until we're actually attacked by spindly aliens from the planet Pipecleaner…



5 GIANT VOMITING DISMEMBERED ZOMBIE HEADS OF DOOM

We ❤ *Samurai Zombie Nation* (see 'Classic Cutscene' on page 86), and as far as we're concerned, every effect from this NES beauty is special.

RETRO TAT

You play, he obeys

And we thought Banpresto was running out of ideas. This 4cm-high remote-controlled desktop Mario would have been just the thing for the 1970s, when people had yet to experience the becapped plumber doing their bidding. For us 22nd centuryers, so used to Mario reacting to our commands that we half expect him to fetch us a pizza when we get hungry, it's far less impressive. Still, imagine how much fun you'll have making Mario and Goomba bump into each other! Hang on, we're imagining it now… yes… it's three seconds.



WRITE IN!

Have you found something that's turned old Nintendo stuff into a new money-spinning gift? Tell us and we'll name and shame it in these very pages. Email ngc@futurenet.co.uk

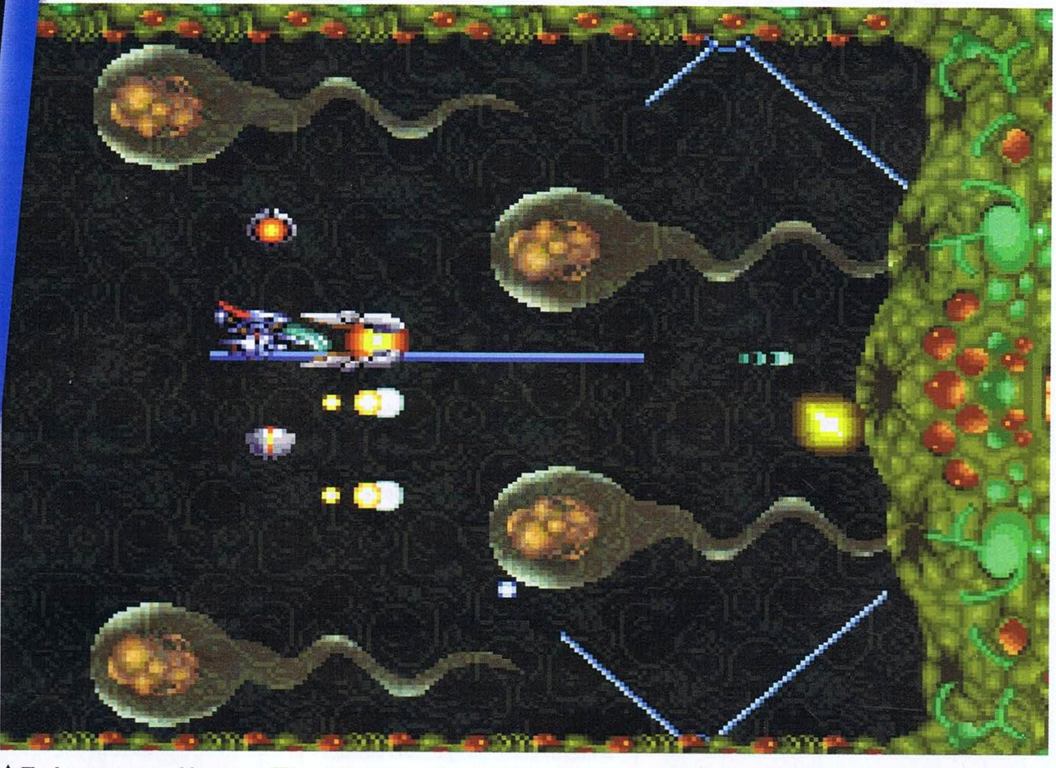
THIS MONTH IN NINTENDO

This month, 12 years ago – **Super Play, February 1994**

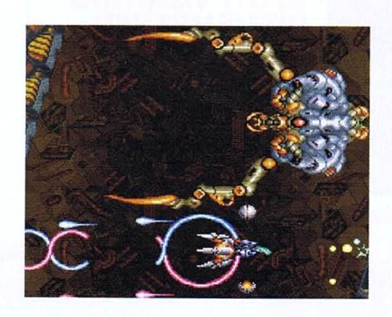




△ With great power-ups and weapons, this was the ultimate shooting fest.



△ The bosses were as big as your TV could handle, and as cunning and nasty as you'd expect giant alien worm beasts to be.



GAME OF THE MONTH

R-TYPE III: THE THIRD LIGHTNING

The third outing for the phenomenally popular shooter...

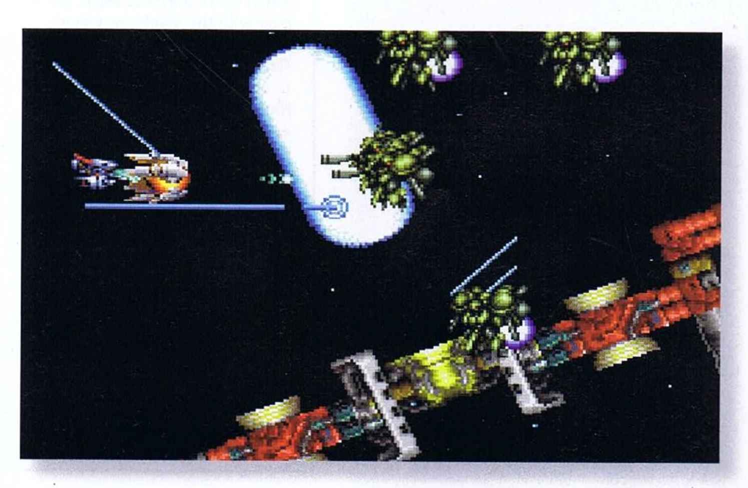
WHAT'S THIS? SNES-specific mid-space alien smash from Irem that turned the formula on its side, span it around and flipped it backwards. Rehashed (and hashed up) for Game Boy Advance last year.

THE BIG DEAL: The original *R-Type* had already set the benchmark for space blasters, but during the SNES's 1992-97 lifespan, this threequel was simply the best shoot-'em-up you could buy. Exploding with special effects, telly-sized bosses and that shield-orb beauty The Force, *R-Type III*'s tricks weren't new, but "when they've been twisted, moulded, morphed and improved to produce a game as impressive as this, what does it matter?" The words of Super Play writer Maff Evans. Who's now an artist on SCi's *Conflict* series.

FROM THE SAME TEAM AS: *Daiku no Gen-San: Robot Teikoku no Yabou* on Game Boy.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT: Side-scrolling shoot-'em-ups were already fading out of fashion and *Super Mario All Stars* was frantically feasting on SNES owners' cash supplies, so *R-Type III* barely made a dent in the charts. There's one for sale on the net for £19.99 as we speak. Don't look for it though – we've already bought it.

AND: Nintendo is responsible for the Western success of *R-Type* – it imported the original coin-op to American arcades way back in 1986.



Everyone was playing...

SUPER MARIO ALL STARS
SUPER NINTENDO





△ All of Mario's greatest hits, packed into one bundle. Astonishing.



△ All the games were tweaked for full-on 16-bit beauty.

A mega Mario bundle, with all of the plumber's greatest hits, for the price of a single game? We wish Ninty would do that today…

It's hard to believe that once upon a time, Nintendo bundled together every *Super Mario* game it could get its hands on (including one that Europe and the US had never even seen before), dragged them into the lab for some 16-bit cosmetic surgery, and then sold the lot for the price of a normal cart. Unsurprisingly, it steamrollered straight to the game chart's number one spot, no doubt bought in haste by SNES owners who were worried that the mad genius who'd clearly taken over Nintendo would soon let the usual cash-crazy bosses out of their cages.

Incidentally, it's no surprise that *The Lost Levels* had previously been denied to the West: it was so hard it could break your arm faster than an angry swan.

Other news...

Old news, tastefully repackaged...

TASTY ROLES

Super Nintendo owners were flirting with their bank managers to try to score the money they'd need to buy a slew of newly-announced, must-have RPGs. Square made *Final Fantasy VI* official, and Enix said it'd repackage the first two *Dragon Quest* games for English speakers. And then forgot.

YOU'VE BEEN AD

Super Play brought us an interview with J Walter Thompson Ltd, Nintendo's ad agency at the time, who revealed exclusively that their Rik Mayall-starring TV spots "promoted the games in a way that was interesting and motivational" and "went for a very broad target audience". 'W00t', we believe.



LETTERS BE

Another bumper crop of thoughts from the Super Play mailbag, including a letter from someone claiming he'd been made to look like "some sort of ogre", a picture of a panda, and the question: "Can you tell me if the French anime magazine Animeland is written in French?" The answer? "Yes".

Worst game...

THE LAST ACTION HERO
SUPER NINTENDO




Based on the Schwarzenegger movie of the same name, *The Last Action Hero* scored a less than impressive 21% from a less than impressed Super Play. Nothing happened in this scrolling beat-'em-up, except men with knives trotting in from left and right. 'Schwarzy' had at least two impressive moves, including jumping up while doing the splits – which, as Super Play pointed out, probably isn't the best thing to do in front of an angry man with a knife. And the result of all this? Arnold Schwarzenegger is the Governor of California, while Mario is still trapped in a world of horny dinosaurs and talking mushrooms.

OTHER REVIEWS THIS MONTH

T2: The Arcade Game
Arnie again, but doing what he did best: cyborgs, bullets and blood.
71%

Young Merlin
A mazey adventure with no discernible link to the age of Camelot whatsoever.
77%

Madden NFL 94
The first Ninty version of *Madden* that we didn't want to crush in our fists.
85%



Bring back the memories – or fill in the brainholes with new ones.

CLASSIC BOXART

MEGA MAN 2: NES (1988)

We've already covered the original *Mega Man* box, and now we're back for the sequel. There's all sorts to love about this Europe-only box: the fact that Mega Man has been encased in metal, the floating face that won't smile, and the bloke trying to hide behind a mountain and failing in a way that only a 1,000-foot tall pink-faced bloke can. We were reminded of this game by a Brazilian website (http://games.terra.com.br/galeria/piorescapas) that's chronicling some of history's worst packaging. That internet – coming over 'ere, stealing our jobs…

CLASSIC CUTSCENE

SAMURAI ZOMBIE NATION: NES (1991)

One day, we'll write a whole issue of NGC about Samurai Zombie Nation. As far as games about giant, vomiting, dismembered zombie heads go, it's the weirdest. For now, you can soak up this cutscene: a tear-jerking collage of images of the land of the free, which was designed to celebrate the fact that your zombie-head hero had, er, swallowed the entire southern half of America…





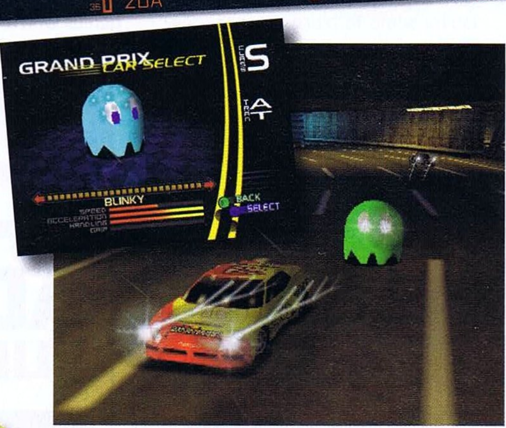




CLASSIC CHEAT

RIDGE RACER 64 N64 (2000)

Well before Namco polluted the *Ridge Racer* concept with a vial full of *R: Racing* germs, Canadian codehouse NSTC tore the skin off the faces of N64 owners with the shocking speed and slickness of *Ridge Racer 64*. And although it was already piled high with cars, NSTC found time for some secret motor machines too – including Blinky from *Pac Man*, who'd be unlocked if you raced 100 laps of track in one go. And after 20 years of remaining thoroughly non-scared by *Pac* ghosts, we had to watch his eyes light up in the tunnels…



△ 100 laps? *In one go?* Do this epic feat and you'd be rewarded with ghostly racing shenanigans. And RSI.

CAREER GRAPH: SAMUS ARAN

She's not always hunting bounty, you know…

+5 +4 +3 +2 +1 0 -1 -2 -3 -4 -5

Metroid (1986) Debut appearance for the lady we all thought was a man. Nintendo's own reverse Crying Game.

Famicom Wars (1989): *Advance Wars* forerunner with Captain 'Samasuun'. Think…

Tetris (1989): Mode B, Speed 9 complete – and Samus is, er, playing a cello.



F1-Race (1990): Samus, among a bevy of trackside beauties. In her suit, natch.

Metroid II: Return of Samus (1992): Disappointing GB sequel.



Super Metroid (1994) Superb 16-bit stunnery.

Galactic Pinball (1995): Blasting away at Metroids for points. She sure loves killin'.

Kirby Super Star (1996): Trapped in a Kirby game. Literally – she's made of stone.

Super Mario RPG (1996): Sleeping on the job in Mushroom Kingdom Castle.

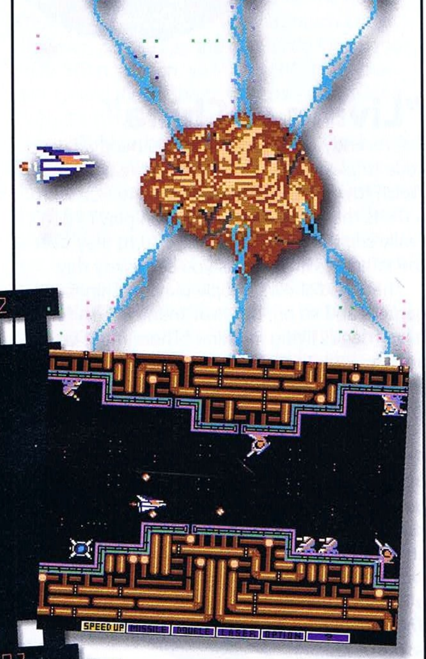


Kirby's Dream Land 3 (1998): Handing out hearts and – shock! – even removing her helmet.

Super Smash Bros (1999) Kicks Mario in the face and gets away with it.

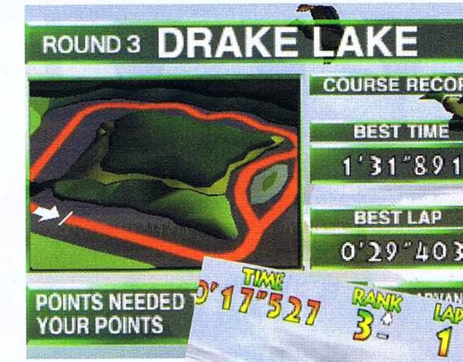
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Konami was never shy about giving its end-game bosses the kind of strength that's usually reserved for hamsters and librarians. *Gradius*'s final boss, though, must have been sent on a special course in how to chicken out of fights. If such a course exists for brains, that is, because that's what this boss was: a giant brain. It put in around 15 seconds of pondering, then panicked and pressed (or 'thought') the self-destruct button without a single shot being fired. Thinks too much, that's its problem.





△ Drake Lake still looks, sounds and feels great. Needs more ducks though.

CLASSIC LEVEL

WAVE RACE 64
NINTENDO 64 (1996)

When we clunk-clicked our cobwebbed copy of *Wave Race 64* into our N64 this month, we thought we'd be tutting at the simplicity of the tracks and recoiling in horror at polygonal waves that'd look like they'd come from a robot's wet dreams.

Surprisingly, though, it actually turned out pretty well. *Wave Race 64*'s superb handling hasn't eroded with age, and even if we're shocked by the Lego-like simplicity of the riders – for instance, R Hayami, the default rider, has arms like rusty girders and hands so meaty they look like they're ready to be sliced up for a sandwich – we're more surprised by how good it feels, thanks to waves that still look great and those roaring sound effects.

Even now, Drake Lake and Port Blue are having a fistfight inside our heads over who gets to be number one, but Drake Lake it is. Birds fluttering past; the tricky bit with the carelessly placed wooden posts that still have race-scuppering power even after 100 tries; the fog lifting after lap two to reveal eerily still crystal clear waters that are somehow more impressive than the rest of the game's show-off wave effects… it's a masterpiece.

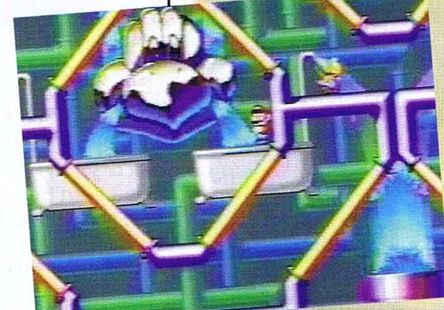
And we managed to finish in pole position on our first try. "Banzaaaaaaai!!" the bloke screamed at us. Which is when the cart went back to the spiders.



LOST CLASSIC

SUPER MARIO'S WACKY WORLD (PHILIPS CDI)





It's a true lost Mario game: designed by a company better known for flight sims, in secret, for a console no one bought, and the code was flushed down the toilet when it was only 30% complete. *Super Mario's Wacky Worlds* was created by Novalogic, its aim being to magic up a Mario platformer for the CD-based CDi console (which, due to events too complicated to fit in these brackets, was allowed to have its own Mario and Zelda games). Nintendo loved it – and in true 'What the-?' Ninty fashion, immediately killed it straight off. No one calls Mario 'wacky', we guess.

Super Smash Bros Melee (2001) Dishes out metal-suited pain again. Never in a good mood, that girl.

Metroid Prime (2002) Metroid turns 3D in style.



Metroid Fusion (2002) Stalked by an alien – no surprise, there's a wardrobe change.

Wario Ware (2003) Retro Samus returns for minigame malarkeys.

Metroid Zero Mission (2004) The original Metroid retold in 21st century style.

Metroid Prime 2: Echoes (2004) Sparkly light/dark sequel.



Wario Ware Twisted! (2004) Tilty supermagic rolls Samus towards missile power-up.

Wario Ware Touched! (2004) Star of the maddening Metroid-dragging minigame.

Metroid Prime Pinball (2005)



Geist (2005) The suit's off and hanging to dry. Somewhere, there's a naked Samus…

?

CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH

30 MONNMOUTH STREET/BATH/BA1 2BW

MAILBOX

EMAIL US!
Got something to say? Run out of stamps? Guards won't let you near a pen? Then log on to the interweb and 'get' us at...
ngc@futurenet.co.uk
Include your name and address so we know who to credit the letter to. Do it! Do it! Do it now!

STAR LETTER

If you send us the best letter of the month, you'll receive a shiny new Gamecube (or GBA/DS) game from our bulging sack of shiny new games. Lovely.

"Mushroom"

Ever since *Mario Sunshine*, the people from Delfino Island seem to be multiplying in the Mushroom Kingdom. This has been really annoying me because the Mushroom Kingdom has the word 'mushroom' in it, not 'fat multi-coloured people with trees growing on their heads'.

The other thing I've noticed is that while the sunshine people have been multiplying, the mushroom population is in decline. I'm sure that if you look closely in the stands on *Mario Power Tennis* and *Mario Kart Double Dash!!*, you'll see more of those freaks than proper mushroom people. I think we should protest.

Neil Goodman, Longniddry

I agree. Character design has long been one of Nintendo's strengths, but the Delfino blob-people are symptomatic of the malaise that has deemed Rare's Donkey Kong family worthy of starring roles alongside the great Miyamoto creations. Sort it out, Nintendo, and I'll put away my thesaurus. Ed



"Ran away"

I've been wondering about this for a while but until lately I haven't been able to email you about it because I haven't had the internet. Anyway where did Enjiki go? You know, your mascot. She's not on the contents page any more.

I just thought I'd ask because it concerned me that she might have run away, but I don't know.

Jack Bauckham, via email

About every three months, we get a letter from a concerned Enjiki fan who didn't notice that we sacked her sorry ass a whole year ago. Just for you, though, here's a new picture of the lovely Miss E. Ed

Bonus Letters

She had a smile like a pixie in all those "I'm PR-ing you now" photographs.
Mike Doak, via email
You sick man. Ed

That's what's amazing about Nintendo – it doesn't release boring games, it releases friggin' bongos, and microphones!
Elliot Kruszynski, Gloucester
Ah, yes. Ed

I think we are all now glad that we will eventually be able to play a game and eat without going round in circles or not being able to jump up a certain hill.
Ingvar Gausden, via email
One-handed gaming. I've seen the future. Ed

I think we must boycott all games.
Henrie van Meurs, Holland
It's the only language they understand. Ed

And the strange bee collects pollen and takes it back to the hive and with no hesitation will make the queen some dessert.
Mr Walrus, Sheffield
Eh? Ed

"Living in China"

I've recently discovered that you need a Friend code to play *Mario Kart* online. I live in a small Welsh town and don't know anyone else with a DS. Is there any other way I can play? I don't really see the point of paying £30 to play over the internet with friends you see every day.

The TV ad shows people playing Chinese gamers and so on, but how many British folk have friends living in China? There must be another way to play...

Jack Parker, Small Welsh Town, Wales

As I'm sure you're aware by now, you can play online games against random strangers without using a Friend code. This system isn't without its problems, though... Ed



"Stop spoiling"

I've been playing *Mario Kart* on the DS for a week or so, and I've found it to be a really good game – apart from the blue shells that it seems to fire at me just as I'm about to cross the finish line. However, what I was really looking forward to were the online races. The thought of racing other people around the world is fantastic. Unfortunately, most of my games so far have been ruined by other racers turning their DS off, halfway through.

What's the point of playing if you're just going to switch off because you came in fourth in one race? Somebody's got to lose. Just accept the fact that you tried your best, but your best wasn't good enough, and stop spoiling it for everyone else! (They're usually French. Ha!) It's not like we're playing for money. Although there's an idea...

Ben Robinson, Lincoln



HONOURABLE MENTIONS
Thanks to everyone who wrote or emailed this month, including (but not limited to): Jonathan Barron, via email; David Foster, Co. Tyrone; Jamie Briggs, Cumbria; mark Baker, Llandudno; Andrew Leasley, Failsworth; Danny Rafferty, via email; Matt Marr, King's Lynn; Anders Baggethun, Oslo; Will Havercroft, Bristol; Alex Catena, Aylesbury; Toby Sperring, via email; Thomas Lee, Lancashire; Alasdair Henry, Morpeth; Ian Walbridge, Sheffield; Jack Taylor, Driffield;

***Without any kind of ranking system that penalises gamers who 'spit their dummies', you're always going to have sore losers dropping out of online games. The only way to get around it is to have a large list of Friend codes from trusted players, such as, erm, people you meet on internet forums.* Ed**

"Powerful"

I've seen some movies of Xbox 360 games, and I have to say that I'm not that impressed. Despite being more powerful than the normal Xbox, the games don't look that much better. However, people say the games do look better on an HD television, so Microsoft's revolution isn't tucked inside the new Xbox – it's inside a TV that's twice as expensive as normal.

I think I'd rather wait for the real revolution, the Nintendo Revolution. If it's two to three times as powerful as the Gamecube, I think it will be strong enough. You can't make the games look much better then they look now. Just look at computer-generated movies, such as *Finding Nemo* – since then, no computer-generated movie has looked any better. The same goes for games. You can get more enemies on the screen, with maybe more intelligence and more things going on, but it won't look much better than it did before. To be honest, I haven't seen a launch game that's very different from anything we've already seen, gameplay-wise.

Nintendo wants to revolutionise the gameplay, which is the most important aspect of a game. If you play chess, there are no amazing graphics and yet still you like it and want to play it. That's the sign of a good game.

Henrie van Meurs, Holland

***Most people probably won't experience the likes of Xbox 360 on HD televisions, so Nintendo's decision not to support the format with Revolution won't make a huge difference to the average punter. But the theory that games graphics are as good now as they'll ever need to be does concern me. Quite apart from the fact that gameplay innovations from* Mario 64 *to* Half-Life *to* GTA 3 *have been driven by increases in computing power, you've got to have something that looks really impressive on the screen if you want to attract the more casual customers.* Ed**

"Upper hand"



Didn't you say, in one of your magazines, that the next-gen consoles will have wireless controllers as standard? Well, the new Xbox 360 doesn't! I've been looking around, for no particular reason, and I found out that if you buy the Xbox 360 Core pack, you get a wired pad with it. If this is true, then Nintendo has already got the upper hand on the 360!

Since Nintendo's new controller was revealed, it seems quite obvious that wireless controllers have already been standardised on Revolution. So, do you go for wireless controllers on Revolution at no extra cost, or wireless controllers on 360 for an extra £33? I know which one I'll choose!

Of course, I know that wireless pads aren't the main selling point of a console, but still…

Henry Tsang, via email

***I can almost hear Microsoft's bosses crying into their coffee.* Ed**

"Arguing"

I'm fed up with everyone arguing about the Revolution. I think that they'll use the Revolution pad for some games and the Gamecube pad for others. These games will still use the Revolution pad in something like set pieces, such as a boss sword fight, a fishing mini-game in *Zelda* or as a lightgun in an FPS. It could even be used as a pointer in a game like *Age Of Empires*.

If this control method isn't used, the Revolution would miss out on games such as *Resi 5* or sports games as a whole. It would make Revolution a pain to develop for and Nintendo would lose developers. Just think of the possibilities a combination of the Gamecube pad and the Revolution pad offers. It would be amazing, and it would certainly bring back all of those people who are sceptical of change.

Stephen Dudley, Widnes

***Do you really want to have to play a game with two different controllers? I think we're all going to be surprised at just how far 'out there' Revolution is going to be.* Ed**

Bonus Letters

Why have you not been putting the release list in recent issues? And when will you put the release list back in NGC? I've been desperate to find out what's coming for Christmas.
Dan Bolt, via email
***With the release dates changing so often, the list was a bit pointless.* Ed**

Complete *Zoo Keeper* for one of the most touching and poignant endings to a game ever.
Lando McFly, Nottingham
***Get to it, people.* Ed**

There have also been loads of grammer and spelling mistakes over the past few issues but I can't be bothered to go through all of your past issues over and over again. Oh, and if you do print this, please put my name as Lord Biggledips the Third. Thanks.
Tom Charles, via email
***What's 'grammer' then, Biggles?* Ed**

I Eryk Rose aka 'Lord Rose' am going reveal Nintenod latest projects! I enclose a file conating the 'secret stuff'.
Eryk Rose, Fleet
***Thanks. Thanks for that.* Ed**

How can you do a freebie on Nintendo babes and not include Sheik, Pauline or the ever delightful Birdo?
Richard Eccleston, via email
***We're saving those for our forthcoming 'NGC Nights' special edition.* Ed**

A Nintendo mag (I'm not sure which one) once produced a Gamecube replica money box made from cardboard as a freebie, which was a success.
Andrew Milton, via email
***It was us! It was us!* Ed**

CORRECTION CORNER

Following on from the mistake Luke Anderson pointed out in issue 114, the Chaotix were not only in the comics long before Sonic Heroes, but they starred in their own game as well – *Knuckles Chaotix* on Sega's 32X, alongside Knuckles and a fourth Chaotix member called Mighty the Armadillo.

Ian Anderson, Co. Antrim

***Needless to say, we won't be running a Sonic encyclopaedia any time soon.* Ed**

vary the pace, and when that's all over there's a great multiplayer mode.

60	POKÉMON XD: GALE OF DARKNESS	113

NINTENDO ■ NGC/113
Pokémon XD is about 'snagging': filling your Pokédex with 'mon, snatched from other trainers during battle. Sounds simple, but the strategic combat is as addictive as ever and beautifully realised. A must for Pokémon fans.
NGC NEW ENTRY

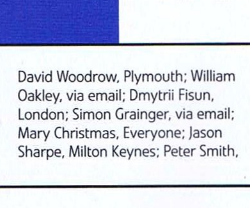
61	NFL 2K3	86

SEGA ■ NGC/79
Possibly not as much fun as *Madden*, owing to the

I think you might have got a bit carried away with the whole '*Gale of Darkness* is (sort of) what we've been waiting for' idea. In issue 114, your top 100 has it in 60th place with 113%. Either it's the best game on Gamecube or it isn't (for obvious reasons). Give it back its rightful 86% and spank those art monkeys.

Cedric Sureshkumar, Bath

***I'd spank 'em if I could find 'em.* Ed**



David Woodrow, Plymouth; William Oakley, via email; Dmytrii Fisun, London; Simon Grainger, via email; Mary Christmas, Everyone; Jason Sharpe, Milton Keynes; Peter Smith, London; Roger Barber, Cheshire; Tom Allen, via email; Christopher Jenkins, Manchester; David Holloway, via email; Helen Graham, via email; Keith Driscoll, via email. Thanks, folks!

"Four or five"

Why do you still rate Game Boy games out of five? All of the top 100 Gamecube games in your magazine are 80% or above, which means that they would all get four or five stars, but because you're doing it in percentages, we have the blessing of knowing whether or not *Mario Sunshine* is better than *Prince Of Persia*. With DS games, we don't have that benefit. Is *Mario Kart* better than *Wario Ware*? How about *Yoshi's Touch & Go*? *Project Rub*? You haven't even put up a top ten, let alone a top 50 with percentage ratings. Please, please, please change this, or at the very least rate them (and all previously rated DS games) as percentages.

Here's a real example of where I'm at a loss because of this flaw in your system: which *Fire Emblem* is better out of the two GBA ones and the GC one? The two GBA ones both received five out of five, so is that 90%? 85%? 95%?. At least rate these three against each other so I know where to spend my cash.

Dave Challis, via email

The absolute best way to use a review is to figure out whether or not you'd like a game based on what the reviewer writes, not the score he gives it at the end. That part is just a tiny summary, although by popular demand, we've now reinstated the percentage scores for GBA and DS games. Ed

"Trump"

While browsing around eBay the other day, I stumbled across these 'ultra rare' Nintendo Top Trump cards and thought you might be interested in them. Look familiar?

Ian Ellis, Wrexham

Wow! Our Pocket Battle Cards from issue 35! I'm sure their rarity value is enhanced by the fact that I threw out a huge crate of them four years ago. Bah – I could have been filthy rich by now. Ed



"Fresh pastures"

I'm sure people will soon come to terms with the Revolution's controller and how the console works, as we all did in the wake of 'Celda', the first *Zelda* game nobody was going to like.

Think back to 1996-97, when you first got your hands on the N64 pad. Even if you had a lot of experience with an arcade-style joypad, you weren't fully prepared for that. It was always going to take a little time to understand, and just look at how revolutionary it was.

People don't like change, and they don't like linearity either (with the exception of those people who buy the new *FIFA* each year). You can't win straight away, but once a few games are out and the system is readily available, I'm sure many people's opinions will have changed.

The way I see things, this is the closest we're going to get to virtual reality gaming for decades to come. We all have a similar idea as to how games like *Metroid Prime* are going to operate, and you can't get much closer to full interaction than that!

This is pretty much what people have been wishing for. It may still fall behind the popularity of the Playstation 3 and Xbox 360, but at least Nintendo is once again taking a bold step into fresh pastures of unexplored territory, flooded with potential.

Oliver Parry-Jones, Bristol



CREATIVE CORNER

This month's top arts and crafts masterpieces...

"Halloween"

Attached to this email are some photos of me and my housemate on Halloween. I'm the one in green and he's in red. We're actually students (who else would go out like that?) at the University of Bath. I would have emailed these sooner but I only just found your address. Enjoy!

George Armstrong

You know, I'm almost certain I've seen your photo on the Most Wanted page of the FBI website. Ed

"Six weeks"

I hope you enjoy the enclosed CD. I've spent over six weeks making it. Bet you didn't expect to play a game with yourselves as NPCs...

DJ Fryer, Warminster

Least of all did I expect that Geraint would be so hopeless at it! He still hasn't managed to go for more than five minutes without dying. If anyone else wants to try it, you can download the latest version from here: nintendodiscussion.com/index.php?showtopic=4535
In case you weren't aware, it's for Windows PCs only. Ed

Sarah: "I think Webby is a perverted badger, when I told him though he smiled and thanked me"

Megaman: "I need to climb up to Vomcerton Village but I'm too tired"

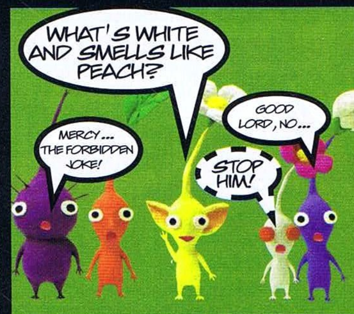
The microwave contains roasted Chuchu.

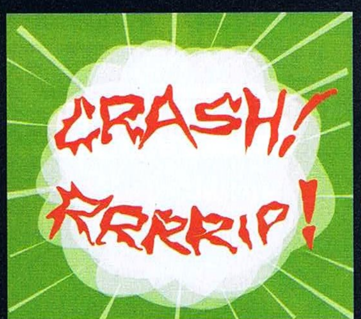
...s Game Boy has a copy of ...per Mario Land 2' inside it.

GriNtendo!

SEND US YOUR NINTENDO JOKES! MAKE THEM GOOD AND YOU WIN A GAME. MAKE THEM CRAP AND THE YELLOW PIKMIN DIES. HORRIBLY. AND IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT.
THIS MONTH: JOKE SUPPLIED BY THE POWERS OF WRONG.









WRITE TO... GRINTENDO, MAILBOX, NGC, 30 MONMOUTH STREET, BATH, BA1 2BW OR EMAIL NGC@FUTURENET.CO.UK



***Flooded pastures? I'm not sure I like the sound of that. All I know is I want Revolution so badly that it's causing a weird sort of dull ache in my legs. Although that may just be this new chair...* Ed**

"Organs to blast"

I reckon that the best online game Nintendo could release would be a multiplayer *Zelda* battle game. On the one-player game, you could unlock new maps, characters and weapons for Multiplayer mode. You could choose from loads of characters, like young and adult Link, Tingle, Zelda, Ganondorf, Goron, Deku, Zora and so on, and at the end you could unlock Fierce Deity. It would be so much fun riding on Epona, trampling Zelda to death; shooting the bomb young Link is holding, causing his internal organs to blast out in all directions; or bursting Tingle's balloon with the boomerang and then whacking him with a Megaton Hammer, before slicing him into little bits. You could even use the microphone to shout: "Everyone kill Tingle!" Genius.
Alex Rose, Manchester

Twilight Princess, *my friend. You know it's going to happen.* Ed

"Psychotic"

I like playing games and I own a Dreamcast, a Gamecube, a Playstation 2, an Xbox, a Nintendo 64, a Super Nintendo, a really good PC and almost every handheld technology Nintendo has ever created. When I look at the next generation of machines, I see a lot of potential, especially from the new Xbox 360.

When you look at the games market, it's not like Nintendo is really popular. Most people will be more than happy with the Playstation 3. Can you guys give me any proof, just a tiny bit of proof, that the Revolution won't be another Dreamcast case, doomed to be forgotten? I really like what Nintendo is trying, but still...

I for one will make sure I have Revolution in the first five seconds after it's released in Belgium, but I'm just a psychotic beer-delirious nutcase from Antwerp. I'm sure that when I ask people about Revolution, they won't even know what I'm talking about.
Emlyn Wouters, Belgium



***Get out there and spread the word then! Although short of standing outside a shopping centre and pretending to play baseball with a TV remote, I'm not entirely certain how you'd do it...* Ed**

SO TELL ME THIS...

Wisdom contained (inexplicably) in a box

I've developed quite an obsession with a problem my DS is having. It appears that a small speck of dust has found its way between the top screen and its protective plastic window. Before you start going on about how it's probably a dead pixel, well, it's not. It's on the protective plastic, not on the LCD screen. Is it possible to open the top part of my DS to remove the small speck of dust, or will I damage the DS permanently if I prise it open?
Michael Marsden, via email

Judging by our experience of opening an old-style GBA to install an Afterburner frontlight, the moment you dismantle your DS will be the moment half a million dust particles attach themselves to the naked LCD panel. Worst of all, you won't notice them until you reassemble the machine and switch it back on. You'll probably have to learn to live with that speck. Just try to think of it as a mark of character or a battle scar.

Why oh, why have no shops in the country (it seems) got the Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection in stock? Every games shop seems to have Mario Kart DS *displayed everywhere, but not one of them seems to have the actual USB connector. I couldn't wait to be able to play with gamers from all around the world, but after going around practically every games shop in town – plus Woolworths – I couldn't find one and so I gave up. Can you please tell me when I'll be able to get my hands on this elusive connector?*
Mark Allen, Scarborough

You should be able to find them now that the Christmas rush is out of the way. Alternatively, there are USB connectors available from various companies, including Buffalo (the one that makes the Nintendo-branded dongle), which will work fine with a DS. To be 100% sure, have a look at the nintendowifi.com website for a list of adapters that have been tested and approved for DS.

I don't yet have an internet connection, but when I do get one, where's the best place to find classic retro Nintendo 64 games, such as Paper Mario *and* Mario 64*?*
Rathe Temple-Green, St Leonards-on-Sea

By which you mean legitimate originals, of course, so other than waiting for Revolution (which will have all that stuff available to download), you might want to look at eBay. Retro console prices are falling through the floor at the moment, so you can pick up some real bargains if you're patient.







Your up-to-date guide to the hottest PAL titles

Games aren't cheap. Even when you buy pre-owned games, it's still a bit gutting to get your bargain treasure home and find you've splashed out on a box of gaming garbage. Hence this buyer's guide! It's got:

- **Our 100 top-scoring games, listed in score order so you can begin with the very best.**
- **Details of which issue it was reviewed in, so if you want to know more, you can look through your back issues. You *do* have them, don't you…?**
- **A brief description of each game, so if you don't have the relevant back issue, you can still find out the most important things about it.**
- **Highlighted games, which go into a little more detail. As the list gets updated, the highlights will also change.**

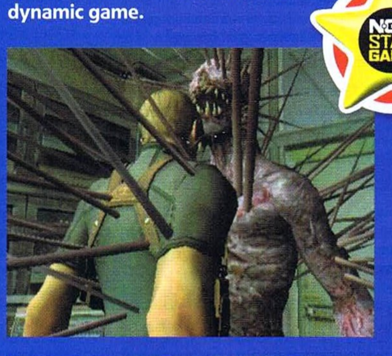


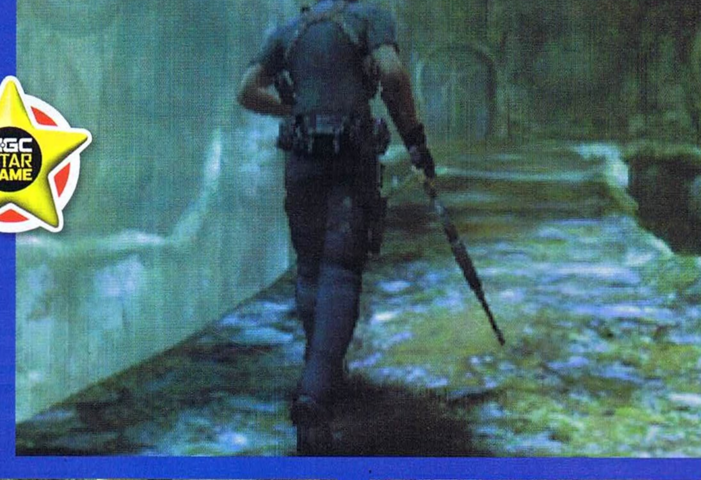
1 RESIDENT EVIL 4 — 97

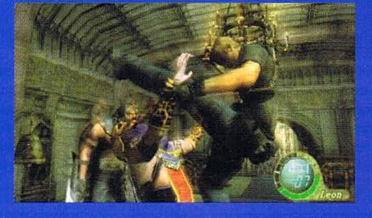
CAPCOM ■ NGC/104

What, no zombies? What's going on? Something spectacular, that's what. This instalment takes the *Resi* series to the next level, with an unprecedented level of innovation. Gone are the three-day-long animations of doors opening and in comes this new, far more dynamic game.

NGC STAR GAME











2 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER — 97

NINTENDO ■ NGC/81

The babbling of the internet whingers faded to a stunned silence when this hit the shelves. It's as exquisitely fashioned as a Pixar flick and doesn't lose any of the gameplay for it. Some sailing sections spoil it a bit, but this is as close to art as games have got.

NGC STAR GAME







3 METROID PRIME — 97

NINTENDO ■ NGC/76

Looks absolutely incredible and there's no slowdown, despite the huge, incredibly detailed environments. The action is varied and the puzzles are mind-bending. One of the finest games you'll ever play.

NGC STAR GAME



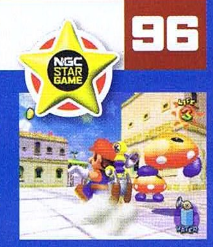


4 SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE 96

NGC STAR GAME

NINTENDO ■ NGC/73

Yet again Mario shows other platform 'heroes' how it's really done – in stunning 3D, with responsive controls and an engaging story about vandalism and poisonous brown slime. Plus a giant water-filled squirty backpack. It's everything you never knew you always wanted.





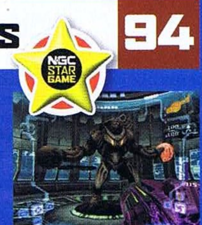


5 METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES 94

NGC STAR GAME

NINTENDO ■ NGC/101

Another outstanding outing for Samus Aran as she switches between dimensions to save the Luminoth from the Ing. The story is enriched by the logs you find, and Samus has useful new weapons and abilities. The landscapes aren't as varied and awe-inspiring as *Prime's*, but that's our only complaint.



6 MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!! 93

NGC STAR GAME

NINTENDO ■ NGC/88

Crazy courses littered with Chain Chomps and pick-up boxes, bizarre weapons from slippery bananas to green shells, giant Yoshi eggs, and all your favourite Ninty faces doubling up to race recklessly. The AI's a bit cheaty (a shell *just* as we're about to win? Hmm…) but it's a whole lot of fun.





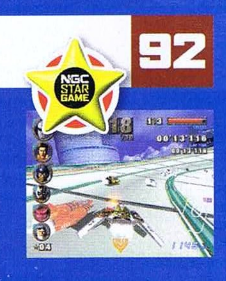


7 F-ZERO GX 92

NGC STAR GAME

NINTENDO ■ NGC/85

This is a blisteringly fast racer that manages to keep up the pace without getting framerate jitters. You'll never accept glitchy graphics again. A few more tracks would have been nice, but with editable vehicles (in addition to the 30+ that come with the game) and a Story mode, why complain?



8 PIKMIN 2 92

NGC STAR GAME

NINTENDO ■ NGC/99

Louie, Olimar's assistant, has shown himself to be less than efficient at managing the business. Happily, it means they've had to return to Earth for a longer session of collecting treasure, along with two new types of Pikmin to help them. Bigger, better and even more enjoyable than the original.







9 SOUL CALIBUR 2 91

NGC STAR GAME

NAMCO ■ NGC/85

Excellent, fast-paced fighting. Weapon Master mode is your key to unlocking the eight hidden characters, but the real star of the show isn't hidden. Namco has dropped in Link for the Gamecube version, complete with bow and arrow. It's the best fighting game on *any* system.



10 TIMESPLITTERS 2 91

NGC STAR GAME

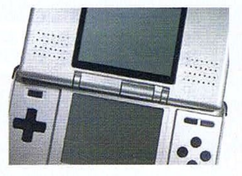
EIDOS ■ NGC/73

Travel back through time on the trail of the nefarious 'Splitters. This means shooting things. A lot. Your weapons are time-zone appropriate, letting you wage war everywhere from the Wild West to the near future. The Multiplayer mode is the icing on the cake. You'll love every second of this.





TOP TEN GBA GAMES





1 ADVANCE WARS 1 & 2

Cute-looking turn-based strategy with a frighteningly addictive, super-challenging core. Honestly, it's better than it sounds. *AW2* is essentially *Advance Wars 1.5*, but it's tweaked to perfection.



2 WARIO WARE TWISTED!

Takes the template laid down by *Wario Ware*, then adds a tilt-sensitive cartridge. You'll play it until you're sick.



3 WARIO WARE

Imagine the simple graphics and gameplay of Game & Watch fired at you in five-second bursts. Loopy fun that you'll keep coming back to.



4 MARIO & LUIGI: SUPERSTAR SAGA

An RPG with puzzle and platform elements, starring our two top plumbers.



5 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST

Undoubtedly one of the most memorable outings for Link (alongside *Ocarina of Time*). Comes with bonus *Four Swords* multiplayer adventure.



6 SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 2

This tweaked version of the SNES classic boasts a massive game world and some of the tightest level design ever.



7 POKÉMON RUBY & SAPPHIRE

It's the same as before – catch 'em all and send 'em into battle – but it's still the most entertaining RPG ever.



8 MARIO KART SUPER CIRCUIT

Nabs the best bits from the SNES and N64 versions and, if you've got four friends, GBAs and cables, they can play too.



9 METROID FUSION/ ZERO MISSION

Everything that has ever made *Metroid* great can be found in these two games: a sprawling environment littered with enemies and an imposing level of difficulty.



10 GUNSTAR FUTURE HEROES

Treasure makes old-school shooting seem like the freshest thing on earth.



DIRECTORY

The best Gamecube games around

11 SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE 91

NINTENDO ■ NGC/68

All your Nintendo favourites get together for a phenomenal ruck across a whole range of game worlds. Think Samus could beat Mario? Or that three Jigglypuffs are better than one Link? You'll have ludicrous amounts of fun proving it, by yourself or with friends.





12 HARVEST MOON: A WONDERFUL LIFE 91

UBISOFT ■ NGC/91

Romance the ladies, keep cows and grow veggies as the seasons change. Despite a new chapter structure, this farm sim loses its way a little when you've got your bride and have few new goals apart from hybridising crops. Well, such is life, but at least you get to do a bit of milking.

13 HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN 91

EIDOS ■ NGC/82

Bald, barcoded assassin 47 comes out of retirement and takes on the bad guys with a range of weapons. Not bad for a bloke who spends his time in a shed. You're rewarded for doing things quietly, but how you go about it is up to you. This is freeform gaming at its finest.

14 MARIO POWER TENNIS 91

NINTENDO ■ NGC/104

If you stick with it and learn the ins and outs of the power shots, you're left with an incredibly tactical game. It levels the field, making it a stage where the most seasoned veteran can take on the most casual gamer and still have a closely fought match.



15 PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME 91

UBISOFT ■ NGC/90

Ubisoft shows other developers how to update classic games without ruining them, as the brilliant 2D platformer gets transformed into an outstanding 3D platformer. Maybe there's too much fighting, and maybe the puzzles are too samey, but it all reeks of quality.



16 PAPER MARIO: THE THOUSAND-YEAR DOOR 91

NINTENDO ■ NGC/100

With Mario's unique ability to fold himself into a paper plane or turn sideways to become nigh-invisible, plus a great fighting mechanism and rippable scenery, this is a brilliant example of Nintendo doing what it does best – creating unique games.



17 FIRE EMBLEM: PATH OF RADIANCE 90

NINTENDO ■ NGC/114

This RPG favours brains over brawn, and it features a large cast of engaging characters that you'll really grow to care about. In addition, you'll get to fight your way through some truly tactical battles. Engaging and emotional, this game will slowly but surely get you hooked.



18 WAVE RACE: BLUE STORM 90

NINTENDO ■ NGC/67

A few tiny framerate problems hamper the PAL version of this aquatic racer, but it is still a fabulous game. It's convincingly speedy and looks wonderful – the water effects will leave you staggered. The controls are intuitive and effective. In short, this is magic.

19 BATTALION WARS 90

NINTENDO ■ NGC/113

With all the hallmarks of the brilliant *Advance Wars*, *Battalion Wars* perfectly balances action with strategy. Commanding armies over vast, detailed landscapes with total control, you'll be thoroughly addicted by the awesome gameplay and vibrant graphics.

20



VIEWTIFUL JOE 90

CAPCOM ■ NGC/84

Some people love the unusual look; some people hate it. Either way, get past the cel shading and this 2D-yet-3D beat-'em-up impresses. Elements like speeding up and slowing down time during battles only add to the feel, letting you pull off amazing combos. Some of the puzzles are illogical, which can be frustrating, but its elegant design and nice touches will still win you over.

21 SECOND SIGHT 90

CODEMASTERS ■ NGC/97

Excellent psychic stealth-'em-up. Who are you? Why are you here? All will be revealed – if you survive. Telekinetic powers produce some intriguing gameplay and the compelling plot and quality cutscenes are engaging. Superbly produced, this is a memorable game.

22 METAL GEAR SOLID: THE TWIN SNAKES 90

KONAMI ■ NGC/91

A superb stealth/action adventure with a healthy pedigree. A great story combined with revamped graphics make this old Playstation title blossom on the Gamecube. With superb voice acting and music, this is a good game that should be in your collection.

23 BURNOUT 2 90

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/80

The best realistic racer on Gamecube. It looks great and it's wonderfully fast. And then there is the crashing. When you've had fun roaring around the streets, you can beat up your car in the most spectacular manner possible. Accessible and entertaining.



24 WARIO WARE INC: MEGA PARTY GAMES 90

NINTENDO ■ NGC/97

A quickfire succession of hilarious five-second minigames are blasted at you and up to three friends. With tasks like nose picking, cat poking and banana peeling, it's original, outlandishly quirky and very good fun. This comes thoroughly recommended, but not by cats.

TOP FIVE PLATFORM GAMES



SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE
This is a tour-de-force of everything that good gaming should be. An absolute delight.

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME
An innovative time-rewinding twist and excellent puzzles make this essential.

PRINCE OF PERSIA: WARRIOR WITHIN
Good looking with trickier puzzles and, ahem, more 'mature' content.

LUIGI'S MANSION
Luigi buys a mansion and finds it's haunted. It's a little easy, but you'll enjoy every second.

DONKEY KONG JUNGLE BEAT
Simply put, it's bongo brilliance.

TOP FIVE RACING GAMES



MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!!
Single-player mode looks as cute as it ever did, but now it's rock hard.

F-ZERO GX
Expertly crafted arcade fun that rockets along.

WAVE RACE: BLUE STORM
Classic Nintendo action with dazzling water effects.

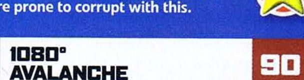
BURNOUT 2
Fast car racing combined with steel-crunching pile-ups.

EXTREME G 3
The weapons are what make this future racer shine.

25 PHANTASY STAR ONLINE I & 2 90

SEGA ■ NGC/78

This online RPG will devour huge chunks of your life. Get ready for lots of menu screens, numbers and bashing crates. Note: 1) you'll need a broadband adaptor to play online – good luck finding one! 2) Third-party memory cards are prone to corrupt with this.



26 1080° AVALANCHE 90

NINTENDO ■ NGC/89

More of a racer than a trick-based snowboarder, although jumps, spins and flips are all there. Short courses and a fair bit of pace keep things feeling tight. The time trial modes are the best bits – Gate Trial will have you trying to shave seconds off for months.



27 NBA STREET V3 90

EA ■ NGC/104

Think *Space Jam* meets *NBA Jam* meets EA's *NBA Street* and you're pretty much there. For the Gamecube incarnation, EA heaped in a load of Nintendo characters. This is entertaining arcade basketball with all the quirks of Nintendo. What more do you need?



28 ANIMAL CROSSING 90

NINTENDO ■ NGC/98

Ever fancied leaving home and living in a town populated by animals? The full cartoon farming experience can now be yours, complete with N64 graphics and strange noises. Somehow, improving your house, filling the museum and getting a life prove very addictive.



29 SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS 90

SEGA ■ NGC/81

Vast boat-based RPG ported from the Dreamcast. "It'll change your life," our RPG fanatic assures us. The black holes in the universe of your quest for missing moonstones are stuffed with the usual RPG battling, puzzle solving and shopping, although it looks a bit dated now.



30 CONFLICT: DESERT STORM 2 90

SCI ■ NGC/86

Set during the first Gulf War, this team-based shooter is superior to the original *Conflict: Desert Storm* in every way – it looks better, sounds better and plays better, and there's more of everything too! There's a completely new aspect to this one as well – you're not allowed to let any of your men die, which leads to all sorts of daring heroics as you try to save each member of your team.

31 WORMS 3D 90

SEGA ■ NGC/87

You know the score – you have four worms that must kill all the other worms. The special weapons are still crazy (sheep, the Holy Hand Grenade), but the real difference is that, being 3D, it's harder to hit your targets, affecting your strategies for worm slaughter.

32 ETERNAL DARKNESS — 89
NINTENDO ■ NGC/74
A horror that sees you playing as a dozen different characters to fight off a dark, shambling evil. As you see more, your sanity meter falls, and when that drops to the bottom… There are a few weaknesses in the combat but, other than that, this is survival horror that spans 20 centuries and is nearly perfect.

33 LEGEND OF ZELDA: FOUR SWORDS — 89
NINTENDO ■ NGC/102
This is an obscure *Zelda* game that's pretty hard on the pockets – in multiplayer mode, each of the four players needs a GBA and link cable. Nonetheless, it's great fun, very amusing and would have scored more highly if the best bit of the Japanese version – *Tetra's Trackers* – had been included.

34 RESIDENT EVIL — 89
CAPCOM ■ NGC/72
Compelling survival horror. Play as Jill if you want to take things gently, Chris if you're feeling hardcore, then immerse yourself in this puzzle-solving, zombie-battling frightfest. There's a bit of backtracking and the puzzles are a tad annoying, but they don't hamper it too much.

35 SPLINTER CELL — 89
UBISOFT ■ NGC/81
Only Sam Fisher and his various high-tech gadgets – like sticky bombs and camera disruptors – stand between terrorists and the Free World. It's the usual stealth-'em-up stuff, but done with a fair degree of flair and polish, although the 'three alarms and you're out' rule can become annoying.

36 CONFLICT: DESERT STORM — 89
SCI ■ NGC/80
This is a rare breed: a multi-platform release that's about as far from the 'lazy port' title as you could possibly hope. This version has been fully optimised for the Gamecube. *Conflict: Desert Storm* is great fun and intensely tactical. The multiplayer is cracking good fun as well.

37 SSX 3 — 89
EA ■ NGC/87
Snowboard around one giant mountain, entering races or showing off tricks. Complete all three peaks and you'll get the chance to spend 15-30 minutes tricking your way down to the bottom. The framerate can be glitchy, and it's not quite as free-roaming as it initially seems, but it's a superb game.

38 DONKEY KONGA — 88
NINTENDO ■ NGC/99
Drum along to a soundtrack, following the symbols on-screen for left bongo, right bongo, both bongos or clap. It's the sort of game that almost anyone can pick up and play. It's also completely addictive and tremendous fun. Despite the extra bongos costing £20 a set, the multiplayer makes it worthwhile.

39 PRINCE OF PERSIA WARRIOR WITHIN — 88
UBISOFT ■ NGC/102
The Prince is older and his game's got more 'mature' (so, scantily-clad ladies and smart-arsed comments have been dropped in). It's still great to look at and great to play, with trickier puzzles than the first game. Although the fighting is a bit dodgy, the rest of the game more than outweighs that problem.

40 TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2005 — 88
EA ■ NGC/98
This is a big game. You'll probably find lost tribes in there if you play for long enough, though you won't see them if you have other interests – you know, like a job or a life. More ball control, famous opponents, the ability to create your own golfer, 14 courses (11 of them new)… You can't get bigger or better than this.

TOP FIVE FIGHTING GAMES



SOUL CALIBUR 2
Gorgeous Link-fuelled beat-'em-up from Namco.

SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE
All your favourite Ninty types, pounding each other's faces in: just what we've always wanted!

VIEWTIFUL JOE
Absolutely spectacular 2D-yet-not-2D side-scrolling single-player fighter.

DEF JAM: VENDETTA
The wrestling game that appeals to non-grapple fans as well.

VIEWTIFUL JOE 2
There's more of the same inventive gameplay, without any substantial changes to the successful formula.

TOP FIVE SHOOTING GAMES



METROID PRIME
Tough as nails shooting-heavy sci-fi adventure.

METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES
Samus Aran takes on the deadly Ing in this solid sequel.

TIMESPLITTERS 2
Classy first-person shooting from the *GoldenEye* boys.

TIMESPLITTERS: FUTURE PERFECT
A great update, though not the revolution that was promised.

STAR WARS ROGUE LEADER
Looks amazing, and it doesn't have any of those boring on-foot sections.

41 LUIGI'S MANSION — 88
NINTENDO ■ NGC/67
The most annoying thing about Luigi's own adventure is that it's too darn short. Apart from that, his escapades in the newly-acquired haunted house play like a combination of *Super Mario World* and *Ghostbusters*. The little man in the green hat has done himself proud with this one.

42 SUPER MONKEY BALL — 88
SEGA ■ NGC/67
The first ingenious update of the old classic *Marble Madness* sticks monkeys in balls, and it's up to you to roll them around bizarre landscapes, collecting bananas, balancing on perilous ledges and racing to beat the clock. It's addictive stuff, but if the main game isn't enough, there are loads of minigames too. These include obvious ball games like pool and golf, oddities like a tilting boxing ring and even a monkey version of *Mario Kart*.

43 TIMESPLITTERS: FUTURE PERFECT — 88
EA ■ NGC/105
This wasn't the revolution that was promised. Instead, it just gave *TimeSplitters 2* a bit of a spring clean. The game has been gorgeously designed and it's packed with juicy extras. The trademark humour is still in place, it's fantastic fun and the multiplayer mode is as great as you'd expect it to be.

44 NBA STREET V2 — 88
EA ■ NGC/84
This is basketball with EA's successful *Street* template. You just don't need a serious basketball sim in your collection – this one is stacks of fun, and unless real-life stats are your thing, *NBA Street* has got it all. Three-on-three action, combos and special moves are all crammed into a very fun game.

45 DONKEY KONGA 2 — 88
NINTENDO ■ NGC/108
A second chance to get tendonitis. The songs may be cover versions, the menus may be pretty poor and there aren't enough mini games, but this is more of the same bongo and beats action that we all loved the first time around. Just don't play Solo mode in a crowded room: you'll look like a moron.

46 NHL 2006 — 88
EA ■ NGC/112
EA has made some big changes this time around, taking the arcade-friendly approach that made the *NHL* series such a hit in the first place back on the Sega Mega Drive. We loved it then, and we love it now – with real-time ice trails, the rink has never looked so good.

47 DONKEY KONG JUNGLE BEAT — 87
NINTENDO ■ NGC/103
Get the bongos out, it's time to change your gaming habits. Gone are the days of using the D-pad for platformers. Who needs them when you've got bongos? This might sound odd, but it all makes sense in practice. Be warned: you'll need a Radox bath to soothe your aching arm muscles by the end of it.

48 MADDEN NFL 2005 — 87
EA ■ NGC/99
The main change to this instalment is the inclusion of the hit stick, which lets you decide how much physical impact your tackles have. Apart from that, and a few tweaks to defensive plays and Franchise mode, it's pretty much business as usual, with all the usual stats and player updates you'd expect.

49 DEF JAM: VENDETTA — 87
EA ■ NGC/82
Famous rappers get together to give wrestling games a kick up the booty. Start off as a rookie and fight your way through the likes of DMX, Redman and Ludacris, and then you'll have the pick of the ladies – though their blokes won't be too happy. Need we mention the great hip-hop soundtrack?

50 TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3 — 87
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/67
Absolutely stinks of PS2 – go on, smell it – but it's such good fun that it doesn't really matter. You'll find masses of grinds, stunts and a huge range of locations. Come on guys, this is Tony Hawk – before he got in with Bam Margera and started clowning around in cars. You know exactly what this is like…

51 LOST KINGDOMS 2 — 87
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/81
Although nowhere near as good as *Zelda* and *PSO*, *Lost Kingdoms 2* is a beautiful-looking card-based RPG – statophiles are going to love building up their decks, collecting new cards to add to it and crunching numbers. It's nicely broken up into a series of small and easily digestible pieces.

52 STAR WARS ROGUE LEADER — 87
LUCASARTS ■ NGC/68
Without a doubt the best *Star Wars* game on Gamecube, both in the way it looks and the way it plays. Take part in the battle of Hoth and whizz your ship down the trench to destroy the Death Star. Note that the whole thing has since been included as a two-player co-op game in *Rogue Squadron III*.

53 VIEWTIFUL JOE 2 — 87
CAPCOM ■ NGC/105
The original *Viewtiful Joe* wowed us all with its original mixture of 2D and 3D fighting. This instalment is more of the same in terms of gameplay, but there have been some slight tweaks, like the inclusion of Sylvia, a new playable character whose different FX powers alter the style of the puzzles.

54 BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL — 86
UBISOFT ■ NGC/90
Wonderful-looking action adventure that has you finding rare animals and tackling an alien invasion. The visuals are stunning and the speech and effects make the grade too. Even the mini games are fun! The world is huge and detailed, but it's slightly easy and won't last as long as you'll want it to.

55 FINAL FANTASY: CRYSTAL CHRONICLES — 86
SQUARE ■ NGC/91
Multiplayer RPG for up to four players, but each one will need a GBA and link cable, making this expensive if you're going to play it properly. The order in which you pick up spells can be a bit random and the players' shared air bubble can be claustrophobic, but all in all, this is good looking and ambitious.

56 WARIO WORLD — 86
NINTENDO ■ NGC/83
Punching, pounding, portly fun. That's fun with a capital F (and U and N). The meths-swilling anti-Mario gets his very own game, and it's every bit as mad as you'd expect. Gather garlic to boost your strength and embark on a (too short) escapade that combines platforming and fighting. Wah-hah-haaaa!

DIRECTORY

The best Gamecube games around

57 BURNOUT 86

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67

This was a killer racer in its day, but was massively improved upon by its sequel. Despite the spectacular crashes, inch-perfect handling and smooth framerate, we'd still recommend you buy *Burnout 2*, because it's got all that and so much more. *Burnout* itself is worth a look though, and won't disappoint.

58 BILLY HATCHER AND THE GIANT EGG 86

SEGA ■ NGC/87

Bright and bouncy, you'll have the 'la-la-la' theme tune stuck in your head for days after playing this bizarre, very Japanese platformer. Were it not for the annoyingly glitchy later levels and the poor camera, this would be a classic. Who'd have thought that rolling an egg around could be so much fun?

59 PIKMIN 86

NINTENDO ■ NGC/80

Only Shigsy could have come up with a real-time strategy game set in a garden. Olimar's first visit to Earth is a resource-management revelation. You have 100 Pikmin to carry out your commands as you try to rebuild your ship before you run out of air. It looks as wonderful as it plays, but it's just too short.

60 XIII 86

UBISOFT ■ NGC/88

Unusual graphics, cel-shaded characters and scenes, plus comic-style effects (there are guns that literally go 'bam'...) set this FPS apart from the gun-toting crowd. Your sixth sense and a bit of stealth help to vary the pace, and when that's all over there's a great Multiplayer mode.



61 POKÉMON XD: GALE OF DARKNESS 86

NINTENDO ■ NGC/113

Pokémon XD is all about 'snagging', which basically means filling your Pokédex with 'mon that have been sneakily snatched from other trainers during battle. It sounds simple, but the strategic combat is as addictive as ever and beautifully realised, making this a must for Pokémon fans.

62 NFL 2K3 86

SEGA ■ NGC/79

Possibly not as much fun as *Madden*, owing to the amount of work you have to put in to get your 11 bruisers playing together effectively. However, the enormous franchise mode and great sound and graphics make this a decent enough game of American football, if a tad out of date.

63 THE LORD OF THE RINGS RETURN OF THE KING 86

EA ■ NGC/87

Orc-slashing, goblin-gutting goodness featuring your favourite film fellowship. With more playable characters than *The Two Towers* (notably, Gandalf is now in the mix), this decent hack'n'slash takes you from Helm's Deep through to the defeat of Sauron at the Crack of Doom via some nifty spider action.

64 NBA LIVE 2004 86

EA ■ NGC/88

Underneath the polished EA Sports surface lies the expected, impressively deep layer of substance. The licensed music and players are supported by a strong bedrock of stats, facts and character creation tools. Overall control has been improved and you've got more offensive options too. It's soulless but slick.

65 RESIDENT EVIL ZERO 85

CAPCOM ■ NGC/78

Controlling two characters (Rebecca and Billy), you shoot your way through the usual hordes of zombies and monsters, solving puzzles to progress. Great cutscenes and in-game visuals mean this looks a treat, and it's got bags of the old *Resi* atmosphere (a coppery, bloody, fear-filled atmosphere then...).

66 MARIO GOLF TOADSTOOL TOUR 85

NINTENDO ■ NGC/95

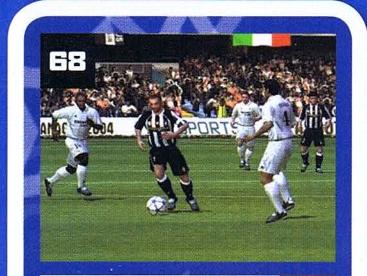
For a *Mario* game, there's a surprising lack of Nintyness in many of the courses – it's just not as wacky as we'd like. And there's plenty of room for sensible in, say, *Tiger Woods*. That aside, it's easy to pick up the controls and the graphics are crisp and shiny. Plenty of modes and unlockables add longevity.

67 IKARUGA 85

ATARI ■ NGC/80

Its toughness is the stuff of legend, even on the Easy setting. Your little spaceship fires white and black projectiles, and you have to hit the black and white nasties with their opposite colour. There are only five of the well-designed levels, but it will take you a while to see them all. A splendid space crusade.

68



FIFA 2004 85

EA ■ NGC/87

Continuing the healthy rivalry between *FIFA* and *Pro Evo*, *FIFA 2004* is the best football sim you can get on Gamecube (unless you import *Winning Eleven* from Japan), with around 400 licensed, face-scanned players, teams and stadia for the ultimate in realism. The free kick system has been tweaked, and the corner kicks are menu-driven. It's all here in a beautiful version of the beautiful game.

69 EXTREME G 3 85

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67

This is an underrated gem. It's very, very fast, the tracks are huge and well-designed, the bikes are cool and the inventive weapons are stunning to use. This time there's an upgrade system too, with bike and weapon enhancements available, and this adds a much-needed tactical element to the game.

70 SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY 84

UBISOFT ■ NGC/106

This was the game that was supposed to give the *Splinter Cell* series a kick up the arse. Unfortunately, that didn't happen. What did happen was a thorough spit and polish job – for example, the levels are no longer linear – and as a result it feels much fresher. The addition of a co-op mode is also very welcome.

71 SPIDER-MAN 2 84

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/96

Here's a game that actually makes you feel like a superhero. Freely swinging through an enormous city, you'll feel the joy of being Spider-Man, doing whatever a spider can. The only drawbacks are that it doesn't look particularly pretty and the missions are quite limited, but it's still an amazing experience.

72 KILLER 7 84

CAPCOM ■ NGC/109

Capcom's highly original, inventive and downright weird adventure is certainly interesting. You play Harman, the man with a squad of deadly assassins inside his head. You can choose between seven of his different personalities – each with their own specific abilities – in your quest to defeat the Heaven's Smiles.

TOP FIVE ADVENTURE /RPGS



ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER
Phenomenal. A reason to own a Gamecube in itself.

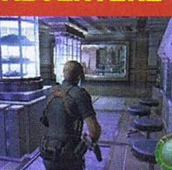
HARVEST MOON: A WONDERFUL LIFE
Not your traditional RPG, this is an endearing, farming treat of a game.

FIRE EMBLEM: PATH OF RADIANCE
The thinking man's RPG and the best strategy title on the Gamecube.

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE
A number-cruncher that turns epic with a bit of t'internet.

SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS
If 'classic' RPGs are your bag, this boy'll be a sackful of joy.

TOP FIVE ACTION ADVENTURE



RESIDENT EVIL 4
Cranks up the action, taking the *Resident Evil* series to new heights.

HITMAN 2
Compelling assassin sim that kills the competition dead.

SECOND SIGHT
Brilliant psychic stealth-'em-up from the team that brought you *Timesplitters 2*.

MGS: THE TWIN SNAKES
Beautifully updated version of Solid Snake's first outing.

ETERNAL DARKNESS
Dark, psychological horror – exclusive to Gamecube.

73 JUDGE DREDD: DREDD VS DEATH 84

VIVENDI ■ NGC/89

Dredd Vs Death sees the famous Mega City One come to life. Sadly, it's not an especially long life. While it lasts, you get to play as ol' chinny himself: solving crimes, nailing crooks and eventually tracking down the Dark Judges. The setting and story are spot on and the fiddly controls are the only letdown.

74 POKÉMON COLOSSEUM 84

NINTENDO ■ NGC/93

The Pokémon series gains an RPG! Your task is to save the Shadow Pokémon from Darkness and destroy the powers of the people corrupting the poor critters. There's an awful lot of fighting here and you'll need a GBA Pokémon game to get the most out of Colosseum mode, but if you're a fan, you'll love it.

75 TALES OF SYMPHONIA 84

NAMCO ■ NGC/100

This is very much a traditional RPG, and a very good-looking one at that. The characters are beautifully designed and the locations are all, without exception, stunning. The only downer in the visual stakes is the relatively ugly overworld. The rubbish, clichéd dialogue will have you gnawing your arm off, too.

76 RAYMAN 3: HOODLUM HAVOC 84

UBISOFT ■ NGC/78

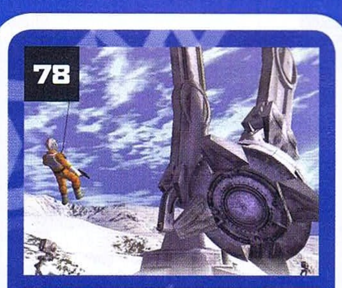
Rayman somehow manages to create a fun platformer, despite the fact that he seems to be stuck in an age when this kind of thing was revolutionary. However, it's bright, it's solid and it's got some enjoyable mini games. It doesn't get boring and the difficulty curve is scaled just right.

77 ISS2 83

KONAMI ■ NGC/68

This series was untouchable for a while, but then EA found out and made its *FIFA* games loads better, leaving the Gamecube *ISS* behind in its wake. *ISS2* is a good game with great commentary, but we were expecting much more of it and, unfortunately, these expectations weren't met.

78



STAR WARS: REBEL STRIKE 83

LUCASARTS ■ NGC/88

Star Wars is all about dogfights with screaming TIE fighters and taking on vast Star Destroyers, not poncing around on foot. Unfortunately, *Rebel Strike* introduces these pedestrian sections, and they're a bit of a trudge, ruining the excitement of the rest of the game. However, like its predecessors, it looks and sounds great, and the two-player Rogue Leader mode is outstanding, bringing the thrills of the movies to life.

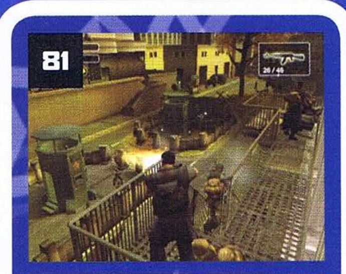
79 SERIOUS SAM: NEXT ENCOUNTER 83

TAKE 2 ■ NGC/94

Don't be fooled by the name – this is very silly! For £20 you can spend hours gunning down wave after wave of brightly coloured aliens across a range of historical locations. The killing can get a bit relentless, and you can forget about stealth and fancy gadgets, but for a bit of blasting fun, Sam's your man.

80	BATEN KAITOS	83

NAMCO ■ NGC/103
Role-playing adventure with card-based battles. This game is unique and delivers a wonderful, magical and fantastical world – the stunning vistas, towns and interiors are awash with lavish colours. Even the card system works well. Unfortunately, it's let down by some stilted and painfully wooden voice acting.



81	FREEDOM FIGHTERS	83

EA ■ NGC/86
Although much less serious in tone and delivery than *Conflict: Desert Storm 2*, this is still a highly enjoyable squad-based third-person shooter. Unfortunately, there are some issues with the controls – aiming in first-person mode is pretty much impossible – but if you look beyond these issues, you'll find an absorbing and, most importantly, fun game that offers both straight-up blasting thrills alongside more tactical elements.

82	FIFA 2003	83

EA ■ NGC/75
Having had the football crown stolen by *Pro Evo*, EA sought to re-establish itself as the king of the football game. The result was a remarkably in-depth and well-presented version of virtual soccer. Along with the correct names and kit, the movement of the players and flow of the game are vastly improved.

83	SPARTAN: TOTAL WARRIOR	82

SEGA ■ NGC/112
You take control of Spartan, a conveniently named Spartan warrior, as he sets out to dismember every single Roman in the world. With up to 200 people on-screen at any given time, this is hectic, violent and bloody, and just how war should be. With historical accuracy put to one side, this is great fun.

84	TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2	82

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/100
This time the graphics have a more cartoony feel, and Story mode unfortunately features a lot of Bam Margera, so if you find him annoying, there's a good chance you won't like this. The rest is great, keeping the classic *Tony Hawk* gameplay and including parts of the first three games – with a timer!

85	SUPER MONKEY BALL 2	82

SEGA ■ NGC/78
If games teach you one thing, it's this: out of balls, monkeys probably carry guns and want you dead. Inside balls, however (a monkey's natural habitat), the little creatures are an absolute delight. The format is the same as the first in the series, and there are new mini games and over 100 levels.

86	METAL ARMS: GLITCH IN THE SYSTEM	82

VIVENDI ■ NGC/88
As hard as Ray Winstone in a steel top hat, this robot shoot-'em-up is tough right from the training level. You take control of a small yellow robot called Glitch, and your task is to defeat a rock-hard army of robots. The camera can be awkward, though, and the landscape hazards are unfairly harsh.

MY TOP 10 GAMES BY BEN BRYCE



RESIDENT EVIL 4
My favourite game of all time, with possibly the best set-piece ever – the barn siege.

METROID PRIME
Total immersion. I was drawn into Samus's debut like no other game.

RESIDENT EVIL
This was the first game I really got into on Gamecube.

ETERNAL DARKNESS
A tale of evil told over millennia, and an incredible experience for all.

SUPER MONKEY BALL
One stick, one thumb, one goal. Never has a game been so simple but so addictive.

METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES
Not quite as brilliant as the original, but just as immersive.

F-ZERO GX
I've put over 200 hours into Time Trial mode alone. It's easily my most played game.

MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!!
The multiplayer is what keeps this brilliant. Any game that makes you laugh is doing something right.

1080 AVALANCHE
A brilliant update of the N64 classic.

LUIGI'S MANSION
Short, but good fun. Luigi really shines in this game.

Send us your top ten games, with a pic of yourself, to: **NGC** Magazine, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW, or you can email us at ngc@futurenet.co.uk

87	PHANTASY STAR ONLINE EP III: CARD REVOLUTION	82

SEGA ■ NGC/94
This is a new idea and a new direction for *PSO* card-based battling. You now have to choose a side (the Arkz or the Heroside) and do battle with dice and cards. It's best if you're familiar with the original *PSO* though and, unfortunately, you'll need a broadband adapter to play this.

88	SSX ON TOUR	82

EA ■ NGC/114
More downhill slick tricks and stunts, in the same vein as *SSX 3*. This time you can speed down the slopes on skis, and there are over 100 tough challenges fo you to complete. It's demanding, enjoyable and satisfying, but it won't give fans of the series anything new.

89	THE SIMS: BUSTIN' OUT	82

EA ■ NGC/89
Having spent the previous game imprisoned in their own home, this instalment sees your virtual people released into the real world to work. It still doesn't exactly look brilliant or sound that great, but as with all games that have no absolute goal or plot, it will last you for a very, very long time indeed.

90	NFL STREET 2	81

EA ■ NGC/103
This game tears up the rulebook and gives you licence to run like hell, boasting a new ability that lets you run around the walls, *Prince of Persia*-style, to gain height when catching or passing a human pile-up. A quality package, though probably without mass appeal outside the US.

91	OCARINA OF TIME MASTER QUEST	81

NINTENDO ■ NGC/80
This game is nothing short of a bargain. Although the graphics haven't been updated, that doesn't mean the gameplay isn't up to scratch. This version has tougher dungeons and different puzzles from the original *OOT*. Forget the graphics (it's an old game) and immerse yourself in Rinkydink's earlier outing.

92	TIGER WOODS 06	81

EA ■ NGC/112
Tiger Woods's almost perfect swing system has had a few tweaks for 2006. The ball is now controlled by the C-stick and putting is now on the analogue stick. Despite being tricky to get used to, the classic *Tiger Woods* gameplay remains intact, making this one of the best golf sims available.

93	TONY HAWK'S AMERICAN WASTELAND	81

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/114
Skate fans can kiss goodbye to their social lives when they get their hands on this massive, sprawling game. There are loads of missions to complete, an optional BMX to try, a vast Los Angeles-themed skatepark, and no loading screens to distract you from your grinding.

94	AGGRESSIVE INLINE	81

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/72
A top-class rollerblading sim. Having wheels that stay attached to your feet when they're off the floor means you can pull off moves like swinging around lampposts. There's even a Career mode. On the negative side, the soundtrack is rubbish and the graphics are a little bland.

95	THE SIMS	81

EA ■ NGC/79
Your Sim has to do all the things a real person would: leave home, make friends, find a partner, eat, sleep and go to the lav. Yet it's all done in a bizarrely addictive way. There's no point to it and there are no objectives, but that's life for you – entirely meaningless, but you want to keep doing it anyway.

96	F1 CAREER CHALLENGE	81

EA ■ NGC/83
Ever wanted to indulge in the life of an F1 driver? Now you can. This is part of EA's *F1* series, but with the addition of an extensive Career mode. There's a series of trials to prove you can handle the F1 disciplines, then you can get on with the racing part, which looks good, shifts well and handles nicely.

97	NHL 2005	80

EA ■ NGC/99
This is a slick, quick game of hockey. The action's quick and the AI and graphics have been improved. However, if you dislike the sport, there simply won't be enough here to convince you that it's worthwhile. For the fans, though, it's easy to learn and you can rack up huge scores. Good fun.

98	CALL OF DUTY 2: BIG RED ONE	80

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/114
Win World War II all over again in this fast, furious and fun shooter. Okay, so the AI is quite limited and the gameplay a bit too linear, but when you're blasting your way through the frantic and incredibly varied missions, you simply won't have time to notice these flaws.

99	MORTAL KOMBAT: DEADLY ALLIANCE	80

MIDWAY ■ NGC/77
The fighting system's been vastly overhauled from earlier *MK*s, although it's far too easy to get an infinite by button mashing. The lack of ring-outs and stage-specific finishers is disappointing. Still, you've got three fighting styles per character, a ton of unlockables and loads of gore. Best with two players.

100	BALDUR'S GATE: DARK ALLIANCE	80

VIVENDI ■ NGC/81
Endlessly battling goblins and orcs can get a little tedious, but if you've ever played D&D, you'll enjoy levelling up and spending your EXP. However, it's a lazy port from PS2, with slowdown and a jittery framerate. Nonetheless, the game still looks a treat and one level has you beating up cowardly lions.



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